Proposal of an organizational culture model for innovation

Propuesta de un modelo de cultura organizacional para la innovación

Proposition d’un modele de culture organisationnalle pour l’innovation

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Abstract

Based on a case study from a company within the Engineering sector with presence in Colombia an organizational culture model for innovation is proposed. Organizational culture is important for innovation since the capacity to innovate demands a taste for risk and willingness to carry out entrepreneurship, which become stronger by an appropriate climate and environment that motivates individuals to create and develop new ideas. The proposal set forth herein parts from diagnosis of the organizational culture present within a company, which allows to identify the existing breach between the basis organizational culture and organizational culture for innovation. The breaches to act upon are identified, with the purpose of reaching an organizational culture of innovative characteristics, and some recommendations for its intervention are proposed. The assumptions on organizational culture typology are confirmed, and the importance of integrating creativity, taste for risk and willingness for entrepreneurship within organizational culture for innovation is highlighted.

Keywords: Organizational culture, Innovation, Organizational change, Organizational culture for innovation.

Resumen

A partir de un estudio de caso de una empresa del sector de la ingeniería presente en Colombia, se propone un modelo de cultura organizacional para la innovación. La cultura organizacional para la innovación es importante, puesto que la capacidad para innovar exige gusto por el riesgo y voluntad de llevar a cabo un emprendimiento empresarial, las cuales se fortalecen con el clima y ambiente propicios que motiven a los individuos a generar ideas nuevas y desarrollarlas. La propuesta presentada en el presente artículo, parte de un diagnóstico de la cultura organizacional present-
The studying of innovation within the organizational context can be done from three areas: the first one focuses on reviewing the form in which components from the process of innovation join and work within an organization; to that end, innovation models (Rothwell, 1994; Chesbrough, Vanhaverbeke and West, 2006; Christensen, 2009; Crossan and Apaydin, 2010; Burns and Stalker, 1961) and innovation management (Jaramillo, Lugones and Salazar, 2000) approaches may be employed. The second one is oriented towards setting up factors and capacities that boost the process of innovation; in this case analyses from the proposals of dynamic capacities (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000) and knowledge management are applicable (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). The third approach focuses on the exploration of the environment allowing to carry out innovation processes, where from the organization and individual groups that make it up are taken into account, as well as the kind of organizational culture and leadership as aspects that might favor innovation (Duncan, 1976; Leonard-Barton, 1992; Sahay and Gupta, 2011; Sharifirad and Ataei 2012; Hord and Buchner, 2014; Flores, 2015). Organizational culture plays a key role in organization insomuch as it influences the company’s behavior as a set and its capacity to innovate, an important condition given the economy’s current state (Naranjo and Calderon, 2015), and regions’ possibilities for development.

Organization culture is important for companies, inasmuch as innovating demands a willingness of spirit that integrates creativity, taste for risk and will to undertake from a corporate perspective, which become strengthened by an appropriate climate and environment that motivate individuals to create new ideas that may be developed throughout different corporate activities which could derivate in yields for the company. Within the literature on organizational culture for innovation, numerous works are found to approach different topics from the relationship between organizational culture, behaviors and innovative outputs (Martins and Terblanche, 2003; Jamrog, Vickers and Bear, 2006; McLaughlin, 2005; Ahmed, 1998; Kaasa and Vadi, 2008). Some of them from an empirical character analyze said relationship through qualitative techniques, while others propose tools to measure and characterize organizational culture for innovation (Dobni, 2008; Rao and Weintraub, 2013; Muñoz, Cornejo, Diaz and Muñoz, 2015; Tejeiro, 2014). It is less frequent to find empirical works on organizational culture for innovation in the Colombian context (Naranjo and Calderon, 2015).

In the case of Latin America, Ketelhöhn and Ogliastri (2013) take on a bibliographic review regarding how the analysis on innovation has been approached, and account for
indicators of innovation per region (referring to the creation of patents, networks of collaboration, etc.) as well as for possible merits and barriers for it to become a present reality within our context and our companies. On the other hand, the work by Rao and Weintraub (2013) sets forth a measurement tool of organizational culture for innovation, which reviews aspects regarding climate, resources, success, values and processes. For the Colombian scenario, Calderon and Naranjo (2007) work out an innovative profile they contrast against metallurgical companies’ by applying a test designed to set the character of organizations, and highlighting that innovative companies are open to their environment and found to be oriented to their customers, whereby they seek to set up mechanisms that allow them to be sensitive and perceive the environmental modifications, recognize the value of intuition, feelings and human quality. On the other hand, Galvez (2011) analyzed the relationship between organizational culture for innovation and yields obtained by SMEs in Colombia by following Cameron and Quinn’s (1999) organizational culture proposals. The results suggest that organizational culture for innovation: a) increases an organization’s internal efficiency; b) improves customer satisfaction, rapidity to adapt to the market’s needs, corporate image and its products or services; c) increases market share, profitability and productivity, and d) improves overall performance.

The present paper proposes an organizational culture model which favors the adoption of innovation from a case study of a company from the engineering sector. To that end, firstly, organizational culture for innovation is established as serving as the basis to define the components and characteristics of these kind of culture. Secondly, an organizational culture characterization methodology is presented in order to identify existing breaches between the basis organizational culture in the company and organizational culture for innovation. Lastly, from the diagnosis as performed, some activities that might contribute for the company to close those breaches are set forth.

The finding’s general usefulness lies in explaining how an organizational culture for innovation might positively influence on the organization, and facilitate the company’s generation of innovation and sustainable competitive advantages. Likewise, it contributes to the existing body of literature about on organizational culture for innovation as it offers a replicable methodology for different-sized companies, which might be used to appropriately define efforts for innovation to escalate within organizational culture.

2. Theoretical Framework

Next, we’ll point to the most important aspects derivatives from the consultation and analysis of specialized literature, which account for two aspects key to the research problem at hand: a) organizational culture and its relationship with innovation, and b) formers of organizational culture for innovation.

2.1. Organizational culture and its relationship with innovation

Organizational culture plays a key role at organizations inasmuch as it influences the company’s behavior as a set and, hence, it influences its outputs and capacity to innovate (Naranjo and Calderon, 2015; Khazanchi, Lewis and Boyer 2007). According to Hartmann (quoted by Naranjo, Jiménez and Sanz, 2011) this is because by influencing workers’ behaviors, having them accept innovation as a key value within the organization and commit to it can be achieved.

Organizational culture is among the determinants of an organization’s capacity to innovate as it connects directly to the strategy and organizational structure (Zheng, Yang and McLean, 2010; Fegh-hi, 2010; Menguc and Auh, 2010) whereby it should furnish the necessary ingredients to innovate (Ahmed, 1998), and provide a “climate” where individuals accept the dynamic present within the business world, and become oriented towards identifying opportunities and solving problems in alternative manners different to the usual. By designing and socializing norms, policies and procedures for innovation individuals may discover the existence of a support propelling them to develop new ideas, and enabling them to behave creatively and innovatively, and also assertively in the face of processes of change and competition (Martins and Terblanche, 2003).
Although different studies approach the innovation-organizational culture relationship, some focus on certain characterizing traits thereof such as creativity and entrepreneurial skills (Martins and Martins, 2002; McLean, 2005; Zibarras, Port and Woods, 2008; Jamrog et al. 2006; Waychal, Mohanty and Verma, 2011), norms and organizational values (Hogan and Coote, 2014; Leavy, 2005), or even a combination of different organizational traits (Naranjo and Calderon, 2015). The literature does not keep an ample record of a precise definition of organizational culture for innovation, but rather documents approximations on the concept from desirable traits and characteristics.

For instance, for Morcillo (2012) organizational culture may be understood as:

“a way of thinking and acting that generates, develops and sets up values, convictions and behaviors prone to elicit, take on and boost ideas, and changes relating to improvements in the functioning and efficiency of organizations, even when it implies rupturing with the traditional or conventional” (p. 216).

Such way is built adaptively among the different elements pertaining thereof: where customers, suppliers, competitors and groups of interest’s beliefs and patterns intervene (external culture) as well as beliefs and patterns from businessmen and workers (internal culture), which ease or hinder innovation development (Damanpour and Gopalakrishnan, 1998).

Similarly, Conca and Molina quoted by Rueda and Rodenes (2010) define organizational culture for innovation as a set of beliefs and values that prevail within a group of individuals who share it, along with the pretense of creating new ideas that may be used at different corporate activities from which yields to the company’s benefit and/or its internal or external clients might derive. Lastly, Piazuelo (2008) states that organizational cultures for innovation in the business scope refers to a series of values, customs, habits and existing beliefs set to define that an organization or company steers towards and reaches innovation. Said characteristics are in connection with adaptability and readiness to change, decentralization of decision-making, existence of spaces for participation, cognitive, communicational and power-handling styles; the kinds of authorities present within the organization, error valuation, learning curves, and positive valuation of conflict among others. From this perspective, organizational culture for innovation involves discourses and practices whose subject is to create an environment of innovation which, in turn, aids the attainment of other results.

2.2. Formers of organizational culture for innovation

In order to analyze the relationship between organizational culture and innovation, must-have characteristics, elements or traits to reach innovation are proposed. Among these there is creativity, capital accumulation, continuous learning, and the setting up of collaboration networks, and a management with a mindset to experiment and undertake risks that favor participation and autonomy.

At first, the human element and its creativity are the aspects giving rise to innovation. To Arnar and Juneja (2008) creativity’s success to attain innovation at organization is managing to have a creative and motivated workforce as well as an environment aiding for this to be possible. To that end, workers, their personal knowledge and capacity to combine observation, interpretation and practice must be managed, which isn’t simple given that the expectation from these are quite different from the “traditional” one, and in some cases, given that creativity and innovation reflect originality and unusual forms of analysis, employees’ behavior might go “against the norms” (Zibarras et al. 2008).

An organizational culture that enables creativity boosts the usage of innovative forms so as to identify and represent problems as well as to find solutions, which may occur by certain strategic, structural and environmental circumstances. As for Martins and Terblanche (2003):

- **The strategy** [emphasis] must promote the development and implementation of new products and services focused on future’s changing conditions.

- **The structure** [emphasis] must promote horizontality and the forming of flexible autonomous groups interested
on continuous learning and with freedom of cooperation.

- **Support mechanisms** [emphasis] must enable availability of resources, time, information and rewards to creative behaviors. However, they must serve as support in situations of conflict, and upon the commission of errors or not obtaining the expected results.

- **Communication** [emphasis] must be transparent and based on feelings of trust that allow the existence and effectiveness of support systems to be perceived.

Regarding the triggers of creativity within an organization in order to attain innovation, Amabile (1988) argues that it appears when resources cross-what is available to organizations to carry out its tasks-, motivation-which might stem from a corporate vision of a future resting on innovation- and techniques-management tools and leadership styles-. Other factors such as clarity in what is sought, freedom of decision, appropriate project management, sufficient resources, acknowledgements, pressure, times and the setting up of challenges may also help to promote creativity and innovation.

Innovation in an organization is tightly linked to personality traits of the people pertaining to the company, wherefore personal traits, skills and individuals’ competencies are important at the moment of working in an organizational culture for innovation (Ahmed, 1998; Waychal et al. 2011). In this vein, the following traits may be established:

- Aesthetic qualities valuation.
- Recognition of different and divergent interests.
- Positive inclusion and valuation of diversity.
- Attraction to complexity and systemic ways of thinking.
- Tolerance to ambiguity.
- Intuition, self-confidence, persistence and curiosity.
- Favoring and enjoyment of experimentation.
- Openness to any idea that might present itself or though up by the individual, and Skills to adapt to opposition
- Favoring of cooperative work

As part of the personal skillset is important to take into account creativity in problem solving as a driver of innovation within the organization. According to Whetten and Cameron (2011), creativity in problem solving is focused on generating something new, which is primordial as a starting point for innovation. To that end, a flexible-and-external kind of creativity may be followed, where imagination and the desire to be “the first” prevail in problem solving.

Nonetheless, besides creativity and the individual component, organizational culture must contain other characteristics that boost and support innovation such as search for constant improvement, orientation towards new and old clients, and the formation of internal and external collaboration networks as well as tolerance to take on risks (Jamrog et al. 2006); the foregoing may be taken as a starting point to understand existing beliefs within companies, and to define an organization’s values and norms. To the above must be added the existence of an organizational structure that enables, if necessary, other work-organizing forms, and thus opening spaces to participation and the identification of good ideas that count with resources to implement them, and where the outputs of innovation can be measured.

In this vein, organizations relying on integrated structures and multiple ties within and without the organization, diversified teams with “collective pride”, and the acknowledgement of their workers’ talents, and whom achieve horizontal communication—typical of matrix organizations—will have greater chances of counting with creativity and innovation (McLean, 2005).

To McLaughlin (2005), organizational culture has an impact on innovation when the former enables the carrying out of greater or radical innovations evidenced in the rupture with traditional ways and significant advancements which account for great-impact transformation, and therefor an organization must count with:
• An organizational structure that allows work teams to operate appropriately.
• Strategic approaches involving innovation as a characteristic of the company.
• Certainty and confidence on work teams in its own right, and the organization.
• A focus on clear objectives in connection with the projects to be executed.
• Teams seen as one, formed by individuals of different skills and complementary background.
• Liaising with external information resources.
• A positive attitude towards change and risk.
• An area of development to acquire knowledge, experience and exploring potential solutions.

3. Methodology

The present research parted from the following inquiries: how to include innovation into a company’s organizational culture? What are the existing gaps between the current organizational culture and organizational culture for innovation in a company? What are the strategies to be followed by a company in order to implement an organizational culture for innovation? In order to respond to such questions an initial bibliographical revision and analysis took place in connection to organizational culture and innovation, which sought to find common ground between these two elements.

Hereinafter, a survey form was designed with 44 questions distributed throughout 8 components, as seen in Table 1, with five-value Likert scale-type answers. The validation of the instrument’s internal consistency was performed by means of the Cronbach’s Alpha statistical by using SPSS statistics. At first, Cronbach’s coefficient for the 47 variables was analyzed for the results of a seven-survey sample. Three variables were suppressed as they yielded variance equal to zero, and finally and Alpha of 0.733 was obtained, which located within the rage of reliability for confirmatory studies (Hu, Delorme and Reid, 2006).

The instrument was applied on the universe of workers made up by 49 members distributed through strategic apex, middle management and base operational nucleus. For data gathering effects the survey was sent through institutional e-mail, and obtaining response from 47 workers. Anonymity of the answers was guaranteed. The results were then averaged in order to obtain a global value of the kind of organizational culture, which determines current organizational culture’s distance from an organizational culture for innovation. To that end, there typologies of organizational culture were set forth:

• Conservative organizational culture (1.0-2.7): characterized by strictly following manuals, procedures and hierarchies where strict control is practiced—specially centralized—on activities. Leadership is of an authoritarian kind, decisions are made based previous data, and work teams connect through formal channels, generally following instructions or directions from an immediate boss.

• Organizational culture in transition (2.8-3.7): in this culture the organization carries out some research activities (marketing studies, technological surveillance, etc.) for decision-making, but it does not innovate as of yet. Informal relationships exist between some areas, but hierarchies’ strict control prevails. Ideas are generated by certain areas and there is no clarity as to the support the company lends for the development thereof.

• Organizational culture for innovation (3.8-5.0): the company reacts rapidly and effectively before external and internal changes, and may be flexible regarding procedures and manual in order to attain such reaction. The organization propends for continuous learning by their workers, whom connect in an informal and close manner. Innovation I accepted as part of corporate values, and mechanisms exist in order to start it up. Members are committed to it, they are open to creative work and the generation of sustainable
### Strategy:
Innovation lies within corporate philosophy and policies, which is clearly identified by all its members. The mission and vision show that innovation contributes to objective achieving.
An approved and known innovation policy exists.
Innovation included in strategic planning.
Innovation indictors exist.
The strategy rapidly adjusts to respond to changes.
Strategic planning includes the clients' view.

### Orientation toward the organization:
The company plans its strategy based on deep understanding of its customers from interacting with them, their environment and reality.
The strategy adjusts reactively.
The strategy involves the necessities of clients and external customers.

### Organizational structure:
areas, procedures, functions and responsibilities are clearly defined in order to enable innovation management,
The company counts with facilities and aids for innovation.
An area leading innovation processes exits
Work teams are cooperative and autonomous
Ideas may be easily manifested in hierarchies
The members of the organization are aware of the activities performed by others
Decisions are made participatively
Work teams are heterogeneous

### Communication and collaboration:
continuous usage of tools and channels to communicate the philosophy of innovation to the company
There's open communication among areas
There are external collaboration networks for R+D
Results are communicated whether successful of failure
Areas support each other without formal orders

### Leadership:
creates and organizational environment and climate where collaborators apply innovative thinking to solve problems and constantly generate new ideas
Leaders promote dialog and motivate the search for improvement
The company's leaders are clearly identified
The leadership style shows it is possible to learn from mistakes
The company has high leadership that dares to take risks

### Organization's behavior:
members feel freedom to decide the manner to approach their tasks as well as to propose alternatives for improvement
There is freedom to propose new ideas
Collaborators communicate with people from different areas
In the face of change people respond without direct orders from their supervisor
Collaborators dare to experiment in order to improve their activities

### Support mechanisms:
there are programs, areas and projects to stimulate and reward the generation of new ideas that bring about innovation
Innovation activities are led by an area
Incentives exist to present new ideas
Mechanisms to appraise new ideas exist
There are resources to develop new ideas
There is work team with knowledge for innovation activities
The company offers learning and forming on innovation

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Creative ideas, and the company has incentives to reward such behavior.

From these outcomes and the characterization of traits present in an organizational culture for innovation into eight components, as shown in Table 2, gaps are identified between basis organizational culture and target organizational culture, in order to subsequently propose efforts required to transit towards the desired organizational culture.

Table 2. Results per component

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Table 1. Structure of the instrument and component description (continuation)

Creativity in problem solving: the company promotes the usage of creative thinking to solve problems and generate new ideas

Source: Author’s own elaboration.

4. Results and discussion

Once the instrument was applied on the company subject of study a global organizational value of 3.4 was obtained, which signals the company’s basis organizational culture as corresponding to an organizational culture in transition to innovation. The results from all components locate in the range of organizational culture in transition, with the best-ranked components being leadership and creativity and the lowest-ranked ones being support and strategy. Table 2 shows the results obtained for each component.

The outcomes contrast against what is expected from a target organizational culture of innovation, wherefrom gaps and required efforts to mitigate them are identified. Likewise, three kinds of efforts are proposed:

- Acquiring: implies a quick and decided intervention of the component to improve its outcome.
- Maintaining: means leaving the component to its current state. If deemed appropriate, activities may be executed in order to guarantee said maintenance.
- Consolidating: in this scenario the component is solid and takes advantage of its potential in order to boost innovation culture within the company.

Once such efforts are defined, the prioritizing of the intervention in two levels takes place: at each component and the gaps identified per component, as Table 3 shows.

5. Conclusions

Organizational culture for innovation is a topic which has drawn efforts from varied empirical researches and construct proposals oriented towards showing how an organization is capable of creating sustainable competitive advantages, from an organiza-
orational culture that furnishes the necessary elements to innovate (Ahmed, 1998), and creates environment where individuals feel motivated to achieve such purpose.

This work’s objective meant to design the proposal of an organizational culture for innovation model that favors adopting innovation for the development of products or services, and its introduction and exploitation into the market.

Therefor, firstly, literature was searched on organizational culture and its relationship with innovation, which served as sustenance to identify the components aiding to create and set up an organizational culture for innovation.

Based on the foregoing, eight (8) components formers of organizational culture for innovation were defined, and instrument designed to diagnose the organization subject of study’s basis culture made up of questions that allowed to conclude the company having an organizational culture in transition towards innovation, which signifies that there are gaps that need closing by following a variety of strategies. For instance, activities routed to opening up space to participa-
tion and generation of ideas must be executed, which also promote innovative attitudes among members; design and implement an innovation policy where incentives are taken into account for those who propose ideas, build ideas assessment tools and, overall, define the company’s innovation management characteristics. This way environmental conditions and characteristics could established, strategic and structural as needed so as to consolidate an organizational culture that favors and seizes its human talent’s knowledge and competencies, that also boosts the usage of innovative forms to represent problems, find solutions, pose processes of improvement, and identifies and seizes new opportunities (Martins and Terblanche, 2003).

As for priorities of intervention to reduce gaps the results from the company’s basis organizational culture signal that none of the components lies within the rank of organizational culture for innovation, with leadership and creativity at the higher end. The above signifies that those are less-priority aspects in an intervention to change, but must be taken into account to seek their consolidation. Therefore activities may executed tending to apply and teach tools and strategies that promote creativity, by which coordinators boost their workers’ creative capacities and obtain greater knowledge on innovation. Notwithstanding, in order to attain a greater impact in the transformation of the organizational culture a time to adapt to changes will be required, wherefore following up on the intervention, evaluating and readjusting it turns important. In this process of change management is key to detect whether conditions that favor an organizational culture for innovation arise, such as trust among people pertaining to the organization, teamwork spirit, orientation to accept innovative changes, orientation towards actions, closeness with clients, process flexibility, self-satisfaction at work and rewards upon success (Rueda and Rodenes, 2010).

Future works could draw on this research in order to approach elements not analyzed here such as the correlation of an organizational culture for innovation with the generation and trading of new products. Despite existing conceptual approaches on the matter, it could be highlighted by statistical analysis studies. Likewise, comparative studies among companies of similar characteristics could be performed by using the assessment instrument designed for this research, which turns into a methodology that might be employed at varied kinds of companies.

Finally, for the case of the company subject of study, the organizational culture model for innovation will be able to provide the opportunity to create an appropriate climate and space for innovation where creative and innovative attitudes are rewarded, and where ideas continuously arise for the development of new products, services and processes that represent profitability for the company and aid to consolidate a corporate strategy based on innovation.

6. References


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