Perceptions of senior staff regarding factors impacting organisational culture at a South African university

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to determine the factors impacting organisational culture at a selected university. An institution's culture originates from various sources, such as leadership and socialisation, and is manifested through, amongst others, shared symbols, beliefs and practices. The impact of organisational culture is reflected in several key aspects of institutional functioning, such as coordination and control systems and human resource practices. The task of senior staff in developing a strong organisational culture is crucial since it is decisive in effecting institutional success.

A positivistic research approach is followed. A probability sample of 266 respondents, both senior academics and administrative staff, was surveyed at a selected university in South Africa using a self-administered questionnaire. The structured equation modelling confirmatory analysis confirmed that six of the seven tested factors impact organisational culture at this university. Six statistically significant relationships were found between degree of flexibility, degree of teamwork, task directiveness, degree of formalisation, leadership styles, decision-making and organisational culture.

It is suggested that senior staff at universities take into consideration the impact of these factors to nurture organisational culture and subsequently ensure institutional success.

1. INTRODUCTION

The interest in organisational culture emanates from its presumed impact on institutional effectiveness (Ezirim, Nwibere & Emecheta 2010:41). The organisational culture of an institution refers to employees' collectively shared patterns of meaning, values, assumptions and expectations that guide and shape their understanding and perceptions of matters of mutual interest (French 2007:28). An employee's attitude and behaviour may be shaped by many institutional cultural factors such as leadership, socialisation, and the business

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environment which could lead to successful strategic outcomes. Organisational culture is thus important as the nucleus from which leaders influence institutional members' perceptions of commitment, motivation, morale, and satisfaction (Olasupo 2011:161). This is crucial as organisational culture affects whether institutions can effectively implement new strategies and whether they can operate at high levels of excellence (Cadden, Humphrey & McHugh 2011:60).

McKenzie (2010:47) argues that performance-enhancing organisational cultures are those that have many shared values and practices, are able to adapt to change, are strategically appropriate, and value effective leadership at all levels. Levin and Gottlieb (2009:31) suggest that organisational culture provides stability, continuity, and predictability to institutional life. This implies that organisational culture is a very useful tool in managing a diverse workforce within the South African business environment, and supports the view of Louw and Venter (2008:87) that institutional performance cannot be fully comprehended without first understanding the nature of organisational culture.

The purpose of this article is to identify and gauge the perceptions of senior staff regarding factors that impact organisational culture at a selected university. Firstly the problem statement and objectives of the study are provided. A theoretical framework of organisational culture will be outlined. Thereafter the research methodology of the study will be highlighted. The research results will be provided followed by the conclusions and recommendations. Guidelines on how to develop and nurture an organisational culture will be suggested.

2.   PROBLEM STATEMENT

The lack of understanding about the role of organisational culture in improving management and performance inhibits our ability to address the challenges that face higher education (Tierney 2008:25). Organisational culture might therefore be the key to successful transformation of universities in South Africa (Higgins 2007:97). Several studies on higher education linked organisational culture with institutional success (Kezar & Eckel 2002:436; Kruger 2003:207). Universities in South Africa are influenced by powerful, external factors such as demographics, economic, and political conditions, yet they are also shaped by strong forces that emanate from within (Niemann 2010:1007; Niemann & Kotzé 2006:611). This internal dynamic has its roots in the history of the institution and derives its forces from the values, processes, and goals held by those involved in the institution's procedures (Tierney 2008:24).

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The selected comprehensive university resulted from the merger of one university and two technikons. Seven years after the merger, the employees of this merged university have as yet not embraced a common culture (Ncayiyana 2011:9). Botha (2001:276) clearly indicates that cultural issues should be managed at the inception of the merger process. The importance of organisational culture should thus not be underestimated as it can play a pivoting role in the reduction of uncertainty and conflict, and unite employees, acts as a motivational tool which subsequently, can culminate in an institutional competitive advantage. McKenzie (2010:43) indicates that these functions of organisational culture suggest that an institution cannot operate without it, since it contributes to the success of the institution. The above has led to the problem in question: Which factors impact the organisational culture of a university?

Investigating the factors that impact organisational culture in a university will enable senior staff to align the organisational culture factors to ensure a unified, stronger culture which can contribute to institutional performance and success.

3.   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary research objective of this article is to investigate which factors impact organisational culture at a selected university. The secondary objectives of the study included inter alia:

- To explore literature on organisational culture and related concepts;
- To empirically test the perceptions of senior staff regarding the factors that influence organisational culture at the selected university; and
- To provide guidelines for senior staff at universities on how to develop and nurture organisational culture.

4.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND OPERATIONALISATION OF THE RESEARCH VARIABLES

4.1   Organisational culture as a concept

Organisational culture is a system of shared values and norms that define appropriate attitudes and behaviours for an institution or its members (Rizescu 2011:75). Schein (2004:17) defines *organisational culture* as a collective assessment of an institution based on the pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group has learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be

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considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. In this article, *organisational culture* will be defined as the configuration of norms, beliefs, values and ways of behaving that characterise the manner in which groups and employees go about doing business.

4.2   Importance of organisational culture

Organisational culture is perhaps the single most powerful force for cohesion in the modern institution and one of the most stable and influential forces that are critical to institutional effectiveness (McKenzie 2010:41). Organisational culture, can however "be a liability when the shared values are not in agreement with what is needed to enhance institutional effectiveness" (Kavanagh & Ashkanasy 2006:84). Institutions must find a balance between having a strong culture and at the same time remain adaptable and agile. The significant functions of organisational culture include conflict reduction, co-ordination and control, reduction of uncertainty, motivation, and competitive advantage for the institution (Ezirim *et al.* 2010:41; Robbins, Judge, Odendaal & Roodt 2009:382).

4.3   Factors impacting organisational culture

A study by Morrison, Brown and Smith (2006:42) reveal ten dimensions of organisational cultural, namely degree of flexibility; degree of teamwork; task directedness; degree of formalisation; leadership styles; decision making; macro environment; strategic intent; training; and people orientation. Cameron (2004:6) indicates that the same organisational culture assessment instrument could be used in almost any sector for example, the private- or public sector, education or even non-government organisations. The first six cultural dimensions identified by Morrison *et al.* (2006:42) are relevant and significant to universities and are tested in this article.

4.3.1 Degree of flexibility

Degree of flexibility indicates the degree to which employees are encouraged to be creative and innovative and to constantly search for better ways of getting the job done (*Morrison et al.* 2006:53). Adaptability and flexibility are necessary for survival and growth in an institution (Thomas & Inkson 2004:58). Flexibility, innovation and openness to change are essential in order to prosper and attain objectives (Schultz, Bagraim, Potgieter, Viedge & Werner 2007:163). The degree of flexibility in the institution is significant in terms of motivation, teamwork, leadership, structure, culture and change (Brooks 2009:216).

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4.3.2 Degree of teamwork

Degree of teamwork implies the degree to which various sub units within the institution are actively encouraged to operate in a coordinated way by cooperating effectively towards the achievement of overall organisational objectives (Morrison *et al.* 2006:53). A culture should encourage cooperation between functional departments for operational efficiency (Gray & Larson 2000:236). Teamwork improves the cohesion of staff and also improves performance (Lumby & Coleman 2007:113).

4.3.3 Task directiveness

Task directiveness refers to performance orientation, task structure, planning, and goal clarity (Morrison *et al.* 2006:53; Robbins *et al.* 2009:35).   Setting clear goals and performance criteria are important for institutional success (Louw & Venter 2010:25). Furthermore, the need for performance orientation and high achievement relates to an ethic of hard work and more competition, suggesting that task directiveness is essential for successful institutions (French 2007:38).

4.3.4 Degree of formalisation

Degree of formalisation reflects the degree to which rules and regulations and direct supervision are applied to manage employee behaviour (Brooks 2009:193; Morrison *et al.* 2006:53).   High formalisation in an institution creates predictability, orderliness and consistency (Robbins *et al.* 2009:405). Formalisation and culture also have similar aims, since the stronger an institution's culture, the less management needs to be concerned with developing formal rules and regulations to guide employee behaviour (Jain 2005:281).

4.3.5 Leadership style

Leadership style signifies the degree to which managers provide clear communication, assistance and support to their subordinates and control is exercised through bureaucratic lines of authority (Brooks 2009:168; Morrison *et al.* 2006:53).   Leadership is a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach the institutional goals (Olasupo 2011:163). There is an important reciprocal relationship between the leader of an institution and the culture of that institution, suggesting that leadership impacts on the culture and consequently on operational efficiency (Lumby & Coleman 2007:104).

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4.3.6 Decision making

Decision making conveys a degree of responsibility, freedom and independence that individual employees have (Morrison *et al.* 2006:53). Decision making is one of the crucial activities of executives since good decisions will contribute to the attainment of the organisational goals (Schultz *et al.* 2007:163). To implement decisions, leaders must have a full understanding of the institution's culture in order to get the support, and promote value creation for the various stakeholders (Tierney 2008:26).

The factors impacting organisational culture have been outlined; subsequently the next section presents the hypotheses investigating the relationship between these factors and organisational culture in a higher education institution.

5. HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested to investigate which factors impact organisational culture:

- H_1: Senior staff perceptions regarding *degree of flexibility* are related to *organisational culture* in a higher education institution.

- H_2: Senior staff perceptions regarding *degree of teamwork* are related to *organisational culture* in a higher education institution.

- H_3: Senior staff perceptions regarding *task directiveness* are related to *organisational culture* in a higher education institution.

- H_4: Senior staff perceptions regarding *degree of formalisation* are related to *organisational culture* in a higher education institution.

- H_5: Senior staff perceptions regarding *leadership styles* are related to *organisational culture* in a higher education institution.

- H_6: Senior staff perceptions regarding *decision making* are related to *organisational culture* in a higher education institution.

This study attempts to provide a framework that senior staff at universities can use to develop and nurture their institution's organisational culture.

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6.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1   The research approach

Although there is considerable overlapping, the two main research paradigms can respectively be labelled as 'positivist' and 'phenomenological' (Collis & Hussy 2008:13; Maree 2007:35). Given the nature of the problem definition in this study, the positivistic research paradigm is proposed to ascertain senior staff's perceptions regarding organisational culture at the university and empirically examine the assumed relationship. Since the research variables were pre-specified based on secondary sources, Structured Equation Modelling (SEM) confirmative factor analysis was employed.

6.2   Sample

The population of interest for this article and unit of analysis was the university's executive and senior management, senior support staff, and senior academic staff, including heads of departments and programme coordinators, as well as senior administrative staff.   The sampling frame is 427 employees in senior staff positions. A final sample of 266 usable questionnaires was obtained, giving a 62 per cent response rate.

6.3   Research instrument

A structured questionnaire was drafted from the information obtained in the literature study. Respondents were asked to rate statements pertaining to organisational culture according to a five-point Likert interval scale anchored from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). For the biographic data a nominal scale was used. The research instrument was first tested for validity and reliability in a pilot study before it was administered to the respondents.

The research instrument comprised of two sections:

- Section A contained statements on the factors impacting organisational culture.
- Section B of the questionnaire solicited biographic data of the respondents; for example, the gender, position and racial group of the designated sampling frame group.

6.4   Data collection

Both primary and secondary data was collected for the paper. A literature study sourced from various publications such as textbooks, journals, previous studies on the subject and internet searches was conducted on organisational culture. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and a letter from the selected university's top

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management explaining the purpose of the study was attached to the questionnaire. Primary data was collected using a survey by means of a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed via email and hand-delivered copies. Data was collected with the aid of two fieldworkers over a period of four months resulting in 266 usable questionnaires.

6.5 Data analysis

Data was analysed using SEM confirmatory factor analysis as it has preconceived ideas about the actual structure of the data from the underlying theory. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is a multivariate statistical technique for testing statistical models that incorporates aspects of confirmatory factor analysis, path analysis and multiple regressions to estimate a series of interrelated dependence relationships simultaneously (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham 2006:705). The statistical programme AMOS 19.0.0 (Build 1376) was used to obtain estimates of the free parameters from the observed data.

SEM confirmatory factor analysis was used to confirm that the identified factors have relationships with organisational culture and to assess convergent validity. Cooper and Schindler (2008:320) affirm that convergent validity refers to the degree to which scores on one scale correlate with scores on other scales designed to assess the same construct. A cut-off level of pattern coefficients of 0.35 is adequate to indicate convergent validity for this study, since the sample size equals 266 respondents.

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were used to verify the consistency of the inter-item reliability of the research instrument. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient essentially measures the proportion of variation within a set of items which can be attributed to some kind of common cause (Lee & Lings 2008:169).

A Cronbach alpha coefficient of greater than 0.70 was used to indicate a reliable factor. Descriptive statistics were employed to indicate the mean scores and standard deviation of the factors.

7. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

7.1 Results of the demographic data

Table 1 is a composite table reflecting on the demographic data.

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TABLE 1:   Results of the demographic data

Demographics		Percentage
Gender	Male	65
	Female	35
Age	20-39 years	12
	40-45 years	22
	46-50 years	26
	51-55 years	20
	56-60 years	15
	60 years and older	5
Level of education	Grade 12 / equivalent	0
	National certificate / Diploma	7
	Bachelor's degree	13
	Post graduate Diploma	12
	Honours	14
	Masters/MBA	37
	Doctoral degree	17
Race	White	14
	Coloured	5
	Black/African	74
	Asian/Indian	6
	Other	1
Position in the institution	Executive and Senior management	18
	Senior Support Staff	17
	Supervisor	21
	Senior Academic	18
	Head of Department (HOD)	11
	Programme Coordinator (PCO)	15
Length of employment with institution	Less than 5 years	9
	6-10 year	26
	11-15 years	32
	16-20 years	25

Demographics		Percentage
	21-25 years	6
	25 + years	2

Source**:**   Researchers' own construction

Table 1 indicates that most of the respondents were male (65%) and just over a third of the respondents were between 20 and 45 years of age. Only a fifth of respondents were older than 56 years. More than half of the respondents had either a Masters or Doctoral degree. This can be attributed to the fact that all the respondents in the research survey are senior staff. The majority of respondents are Black or African. More than half of the respondents were in a supervisory position, an executive or senior management position or a senior academic.   Nearly two thirds of the respondents had 11 years or more service at the institution and only a few had less than five years.

7.2   Results of the SEM confirmatory factor analysis

Table 2 shows the SEM confirmatory factor matrix for organisational culture in a higher education institution. All factors not loading to 0.35 were deleted.

TABLE 2:   Confirmatory factor analysis matrix for organisational culture

Item no.	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
FLEX1	0.717					
FLEX2	0.677					
FLEX3	0.760					
FLEX4	0.632					
FLEX5	0.611					
TEAM1		0.682				
TEAM2		0.779				
TEAM3		0.786				
TEAM4		0.823				
TEAM5		0.660				
DIRECT1			0.741			
DIRECT2			0.709			
DIRECT3			0.694			
DIRECT4			0.740			
DIRECT5			0.696			
FORMAL1				0.832		
FORMAL2				0.639		

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Item no.	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
FORMAL3				0.673		
FORMAL4				0.586		
FORMAL5				0.702		
LEAD1					0.689	
LEAD2					0.836	
LEAD3					0.836	
LEAD4					0.777	
LEAD5					0.773	
DECISION1						0.618
DECISION2						0.198
DECISION3						0.724
DECISION4						0.700
DECISION5						0.798
Cronbach's alpha	0.809	0.860	0.838	0.814	0.885	0.737

Key: F1 = Degree of flexibility; F2 = Degree of teamwork; F3 = Task directiveness; F4 = Degree of formalisation; F5 = Leadership styles; F6 = Decision-making

Source: Researchers' own construction

The confirmatory factor analysis results in Table 2 illustrated factor loadings ranging between 0.198 and 0.836. As can be seen in Table 2, all the items, but one (DECISION2) were above 0.35 and thus retained.   In respect of the validity of the research instrument, the pattern coefficients after deletion of the one item (DECISION2), demonstrated loadings ranging between 0.586 and 0.836, indicating acceptable levels of inter-correlation between the items and pre-specified factors. This finding illustrates that the scale demonstrates the relationships shown to exist based on theory and/or prior research. Consequently, the convergent validity of this scale can be confirmed and will be used to assess organisational culture.

With regard to the Cronbach's alpha values, all factors had values above 0.7, the cut-off point. The new Cronbach's alpha value for the decision making factor after deletion of the one item (D2) improved to 0.778.   These results signal the inter-item reliability of the measuring instrument for organisational culture.

7.3   Results of the descriptive statistics

Table 3 presents the results of the descriptive statistics of the factors impacting organisational culture.

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TABLE 3:   Results of descriptive statistics

Factors	Mean	Standard deviation
Degree of flexibility (F1)	2.708	0.730
Degree of teamwork (F2)	2.672	0.784
Task directiveness (F3)	2.814	0.834
Degree of formalisation (F4)	2.892	0.805
Leadership styles (F5)	2.867	0.954
Decision-making (F6)	2.910	0.817

Source**:** Researchers' own construction

From Table 3 it is evident that all the means scores tend towards 3 (neutral). Respondents are thus neutral whether these factors impact organisational culture. Standard deviation scores are all below 1, indicating there is not much variability around the means scores.

7.4   Results of the goodness-of-fit indices for organisational culture

The results of the goodness-of-fit indices of the organisational culture model are listed in Table 4.

TABLE 4:   Results of the goodness-of-fit indices of organisational culture
model

Goodness of fit indices	Values
χ^2/df	3.01
GFI	0.782
CFI	0.846
RMSEA	0.087
90% confidence internal for RMSEA	0.081; 0.093

Source: Researchers' own construction

The ratio of χ^2 to degrees of freedom is slightly above the threshold value of three and could indicate an acceptable model fit. The GFI value is below 0.8 and can be regarded as an inadequate fit. The CFI value is below the threshold of 0.9 and thus indicates no model fit. The RMSEA value is just above the 0.08 threshold and can still be regarded as an adequate fit. The upper limit of the 90% confidence interval for RMSEA is above the 0.08 upper limit of the RMSEA interval, thereby indicating no model fit. As can be seen, only two of the

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goodness-of-fit indices suggest an acceptable fit, so it can be assumed that the data does not fit the model.

7.5   Results of the statistically significant relationships

Table 5 provides a summary of the statistically significant relationships of the organisational culture model.

TABLE 5:   Statistically significant relationship of the organisational culture model

Factors	Path coefficients	Standard error	Critical ratio	Outcome
Degree of flexibility	0.877	0.050	9.858*	Supported
Degree of teamwork	0.787	0.048	9.759*	Supported
Task directiveness	0.909	0.062	10.866*	Supported
Degree of formalisation	0.943	0.062	11.519*	Supported
Leadership styles	0.828	0.064	11.999*	Supported
Decision making	0.887	0.061	13.232*	Supported

$*p < 0.05$

Source**:** Researchers' own construction

As can be seen in Table 5, six statistically significant relationships were found for factors impacting organisational culture. The critical values are all above 1.96 indicating a statistically significant relationship at $p < 0.05$. All path coefficients are strong and positive, varying between 0.787 and 0.943.

8.   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the data does not fit the model as only two of the goodness-of-fit indices suggest an acceptable fit, six statistically significant relationships were found to impact organisational culture. The following conclusions and recommendations are based on the SEM confirmatory factor analysis of the factors impacting organisational culture and the literature review:

- There is a statistical significant relationship between *degree of flexibility* and *organisational culture* (H$_1$). *S*enior university staff perceives that there are an environment that fosters innovation where staff are encouraged to be creative in conducting tasks and are provided with stimulating tasks and projects, there is a culture of openness to change and policies and practices are continuously reviewed to reflect cultural changes. This is in

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congruence with some literature findings. Brooks (2009:216) found that the degree of flexibility in an institution has implications for organisational behaviour and culture. Degree of flexibility encourages institutions to stimulate employee creativity and innovation as indicated by Morrison *et al.* (2006:53). Schultz *et al.* (2007:37) found that flexibility, innovation and openness to change contribute towards organisational effectiveness and attainment of the organisational goals. The university need to have a flexible supportive leadership style to adjust to changing economic conditions as it can be a source of competitive advantage, as suggested by Thomas and Inkson (2004:58). They should continuously review all policies, practices and processes to accommodate and reflect cultural changes and conduct annual cultural audits.

▪ A statistically significant relationship was found between *degree of teamwork* and *organisational culture* (H$_2$). Senior staff at the university perceives that a team culture is encouraged and observe cooperation between teams in various departments as was emphasised by Gray and Larson (2000:236) as essential for operational efficiency. Senior staff perceives that the teams share information, support, and trust each other. This confirms literature findings that a strong corporate culture encourages teamwork as was advocated by Lumby and Coleman (2007:113). Senior staff should urge staff across departments and faculties to work with one another to build competencies and capabilities and synergy in the delivering of high quality teaching, research and engagement as suggested by Morrison *et al.* (2006:53). Senior staff should also encourage a positive attitude among employees by promoting a "principle" of sharing information and supporting each other across departmental boundaries to foster internal communication and support organisational culture as it improves staff cohesion, as recommended by Lumby and Coleman (2007:113).

▪ A statistically significant relationship emerged between *task directiveness* and or*ganisational culture* (H$_3$). Senior staff at the university is of the opinion that clear objectives are provided for task completion in the institution, where staff members have specific roles directed towards the achievement of the institution's objectives. Leadership in the institution is perceived as directive in terms of performance standards and strict policies and procedures are in place to guide goal achievement and support the university's culture. Louw and Venter (2010:25) confirmed that institutions must define clear goals, tasks and performance standards so that staff understands what is expected of them. Senior staff should be prescriptive in terms of performance standards with strict

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policies and procedures in place to guide goal achievement and these objectives should be aligned to the university's organisational culture as suggested by French (2007:38). The university should ensure that jobs are well-structured, routine, unambiguous, and that employees know exactly how to complete tasks to support the organisational culture as highlighted by Louw and Venter (2010:25).

- A significant relationship between the *degree of formalisation* and o*rganisational culture* (H_4) was reported. Senior staff at the university appear to perceive that work practices and formal workplace arrangements should be clearly outlined, so as to create a formal atmosphere without uncertainty to support the institution's culture. It is perceived that staff ought to have prescribed written procedures that communicate a clear and strict reporting hierarchy. Robbins *et al.* (2009:405) indicated that the stronger the institution's culture, the less need there will be for developing formal rules and regulations to guide employee behaviour and institutional goals and practices will be clearer, which will lessen employee uncertainty. Senior staff should therefore encourage formalisation at the university by developing formal rules and regulations to guide employee behaviour and strengthen their organisational culture to create orderliness and consistency which assist in aligning staff with their objectives, as suggested by Gottlieb (2009:31). This will reduce uncertainty, strengthen organisational culture, and assist new employees to be incorporated into the university more easily.

- *Leadership styles* exert a significant positive influence on *organisational culture* (H_5). Senior staff at the university is of the opinion that leaders in the institution not only need to provide clear and unambiguous communication, but encourage and motivate staff to ensure a strong culture. It is perceived that management are inclined to consider, assess and appreciate staff views, and with due recognition, acknowledge staff achievement. Olasupo (2011:161) confirmed that successful leadership require the motivation and appreciation of staff views as this will influence their job satisfaction and performance. Staff should also be assisted in career advancement. The voluntary participation of subordinates should be sought in order to reach goals and align it to organisational culture as suggested by Olasupo (2011:163). Senior staff at the university should ensure that communication flow freely and accurately to build staff trust and a sound organisational culture at the university as advocated by Brooks (2009:168). Senior staff at the university should spend more time managing and rewarding performance, showing individual

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consideration, provide intellectual stimulation, and inspiring staff as this will strengthen organisational culture at the institution as was suggested Morrison *et al.* (2006:53).

▪ A significant relationship between *decision making* and *organisational culture* (H_6) was observed. Senior staff at the university perceives that strategic decisions are made under conditions of certainty at the institution and that such decisions are based on facts and aligned to the organisational culture. Staff has the opportunity to make decisions within boundaries, under supervision and decisions based on collective consensus are encouraged. Tierney (2008:26) confirmed that to implement decisions, leaders must have a full understanding of the institution's culture to get the stakeholders' support. Senior staff at the university should acknowledge cultural differences in making decisions and be alerted to the importance of control and coordination in the decision making process in ensuring operational efficiency and supporting organisational culture, as advocated by Louw and Venter (2008:87). All staff should be encouraged to share in decision-making within boundaries set by their supervisors to strengthen the organisational culture as suggested by McKenzie (2010:47).

9.   LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The use of the mixed method research design, which combines quantitative and qualitative methods, can provide a more complete investigation, especially as culture involves "feelings" or "beliefs". A comparative study with another university, with similar conditions prevailing, would assist in verifying and enhancing the credibility of the findings of the study.

Suggestions for future research could include exploring the differences and similarities of factors influencing organisational culture in a comparative study of this university and other merged universities.

10.   GUIDELINES TO DEVELOP AND NURTURE AN ORGANISA-TIONAL CULTURE

Table 6 outline general guidelines that universities can follow to develop and nurture their organisational culture.

TABLE 6:   Managerial guidelines to develop and nurture an organisational culture

No	Managerial guidelines to develop and nurture organisational culture
1	Foster an environment of innovation and openness to cultural change

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No	Managerial guidelines to develop and nurture organisational culture
2	Encourage staff to be creative in conducting tasks by providing them with stimulating tasks and projects
3	Review policies and practices continuously to reflect cultural changes
4	Encourage a team culture and ensure there is cooperation across teams in various departments
5	Persuade staff to trust, support each other and share information
6	Allocate specific roles to staff directed towards goal achievement
7	Provide clear objectives and performance standards for task completion
8	Divide work into fixed and highly specialised tasks
9	Provide strict written policies and procedures and clearly outlined work practices to guide goal achievement
10	Supply staff with a formal work atmosphere and workplace arrangement
11	Ensure there is a strict and clear reporting hierarchy with clear communication channels
12	Encourage and motivate staff by acknowledging their achievements and views
13	Assist staff in career advancement
14	Allow staff to make decisions within boundaries set by immediate supervisors
15	Base most decisions on collective consensus and facts, not on emotions

Source: Researchers' own construction

The benefits of having a strong organisational culture in a university are consensus and endorsement of institutional values and norms that facilitate social control within the institution. This enhances goal alignment and causes less uncertainty about the proper course of action and it could also enhance employees' motivation and performance (Ezirim *et al.* 2010; Niemann 2010; Tierney 2008).

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