ORIGINAL RESEARCH – QUALITATIVE

Competing Values Framework: A useful tool to define the predominant culture in a maternity setting in Australia

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To identify the predominant culture of an organisation which could then assess readiness for change.
Design: An exploratory design using the Competing Values Framework (CVF) as a self-administered survey tool.
Setting: The Maternity Unit in one Australian metropolitan tertiary referral hospital.
Subjects: All 120 clinicians (100 midwives and 20 obstetricians) employed in the maternity service were invited to participate; 26% responded.
Main outcome measure: The identification of the predominant culture of an organisation to assess readiness for change prior to the implementation of a new policy.
Results: The predominant culture of this maternity unit, as described by those who responded to the survey, was one of hierarchy with a focus on rules and regulations and less focus on innovation, flexibility and teamwork. These results suggest that this unit did not have readiness to change.
Conclusion: There is value in undertaking preparatory work to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of an organisation prior to designing and implementing change. This understanding can influence additional preliminary work that may be required to increase the readiness for change and therefore increase the opportunity for successful change. The CVF is a useful tool to identify the predominant culture and characteristics of an organisation that could influence the success of change.

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Statement of Significance:

Problem or issue
Implementation of significant change in healthcare can be challenging.

What is already known
Prior to the implementation of innovations in health care settings, there is often little consideration of the cultural characteristics of the organisation that may determine their readiness to change.

What this paper adds
This paper describes a methodology to determine the predominant culture using the Competing Values Framework. The assessment process at the study site revealed characteristics that would need to be considered if change was to be effective and sustainable. This process can assist in change management strategies.

1. Background and context for the study

This paper describes the process that one maternity service undertook to gain a better understanding of the predominant culture and characteristics of the organisation prior to the implementation of a mandatory government policy.

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The effectiveness of implementing innovations in healthcare was the focus of an important systematic review in 2004.[1] The review confirmed that prior to implementation of innovations in health care settings there was often little consideration of the characteristics of the organisation that may determine their readiness to change. Failure to recognise or understand the organisational characteristics has been described as the root cause of the mediocre success of programmes designed for quality improvement in diverse disciplines.[2–9] The literature warns of the consequences of not assessing the powerful influence of organisational cultural on efforts to bring about change.[6,10,11]

The focus of change processes is often on the practical and material change requirements. The less visible and tacit characteristics of the people who will be involved in the change are often over looked.[12–14] These characteristics include participants' self-efficacy, the congruence between values and attitudes of the individual and the organisation, the personal and organisational valence, the leadership style and support and the perception of the value of the proposed change.[2,3,15–18]

The impetus for assessing the readiness for change in one maternity service was the mandatory implementation of a government policy that would require significant adjustments in order to meet the key deliverables. In this paper we will use this policy as an example to demonstrate why examination of the organisation may be beneficial as preparatory work.

In 2010, the government of New South Wales (NSW), Australian, issued a public health policy, "Maternity – Towards Normal Birth".[19] The policy required all NSW public maternity services to implement strategies to reduce a range of potentially unnecessary interventions in birth. Target measures were to be achieved over a 5-year period, with each health service accountable for outcomes. For a majority of the services this was the first time such targets had been set and it was recognised that this would require a significant reorganisation of systems to achieve improvements. For example, the target for women having a vaginal birth after a previous caesarean section (CS) operation was set at greater than 60% and in 2010 the State average was 12% (range 2.9–26%).[20] At the research site the success rate of vaginal birth after CS in 2010 was 12%. Therefore, a five-fold improvement in current practices would need to occur to achieve the target outcomes.

In addition, outcome data in Australia demonstrates variations in intervention rates in childbirth that cannot be explained by either the demographics or clinical history of the women.[21,22] This literature suggests that the context and cultural characteristics of organisations may influence intervention in birth, rather than the clinical variables of the woman or her baby. Possible explanations for variations that have been cited in the literature are the effectiveness of collaboration between care providers and aspects of team work.[23–30] The evidence suggests there is a direct link between teamwork and patient outcomes including mortality rates.[31] Where there is effective interprofessional collaboration, based on mutual trust and respect with shared decision making and engagement at all levels, the quality and safety of care is improved.[32–35]

In accepting this to be the case, gaining a better understanding of the characteristics of the organisation and using this information to facilitate the development of strategies for change may have a positive impact on the success rate overall and including the mandated government policy. The policy requires a reduction in the overall intervention rates which could be achieved through work focused on work place culture, rather than exclusively on the development of practices and procedures.

1.1. Study location

The research site for this study was an Australian, tertiary level, maternity service in a major city. The service cares for around 2,500 women and babies per year; employs 120 obstetric and midwifery clinicians and is a major teaching hospital, affiliated with two universities.

2. Study design and methods

An exploratory design using a self-administered, staff survey was used. Ethical approval for the study was provided by the New South Wales Health Human Research Ethics Committee (0911-313M), as part of a larger study investigating a change management process in the maternity service.

2.1. Competing Values Framework (CVF)

The tool selected to assess the culture of the organisation and its readiness for change was the CVF. This is a validated instrument that has been described in the literature in over 1000 studies, across disciplines, to describe the typology of organisational culture.[18]

The results of a systematic review[36] of the instruments available for cultural assessment specifically suitable for healthcare services was used to select the most appropriate instrument for use in this study; the Competing Values Framework. This instrument had the strength of examining the values and beliefs of the participants that informed their opinions about their working environment. CVF was also cited as the most frequently used to measure organisational culture in health services research.[37]

2.2. Description of the CVF

The CVF was developed empirically in the early 1980s based on Jung's model of psychological archetypes and research on indicators for organisational effectiveness.[18] The framework has a typological design that identifies four *types* of cultures that exist within an organisation: Clan, Adhocracy, Hierarchy and Market with each describing the values, basic assumptions and attributes that are recognised within a team or organisation.

Each of the culture types are described as follows by Cameron et al. (Table 1) with the competing values in opposite quadrants of the table and hence the origin of the name of the framework.

The predominant culture is determined by the participants' rating of six specific dimensions of the organisation: the dominant

Table 1
Competing Values Framework (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

Clan	Adhocracy
Predominant feeling of teamwork and trust amongst colleagues with an orientation towards collaboration and cohesion.	Emphasis on innovation and risk taking and is a dynamic and creative workplace which encourages individuality and flexibility.
The glue of this organisation is a sense of commitment and loyalty.	The glue of this organisation is a commitment to innovation and experimentation.
Hierarchy	**Market**
A very structured place to work with success defined in terms of smooth and efficient operations.	A focus on results and outputs in a controlled and stable environment where leaders are hard driving producers.
Adherence to rules, regulations, policies and procedures is the glue of this organisation.	An emphasis on winning is the glue of this organisation.