PROJECT CULTURE WITHIN CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS - A PILOT CASE STUDY

Jian Zuo¹, and George Zillante²

¹ School of Natural and Built Environments, University of South Australia, North Terrace, Adelaide, South Australia 5000, Australia. Tel: 61 8 8302 1914; Fax: 61 8 8302 2252; Email: Jian.Zuo@postgrads.unisa.edu.au
² School of Natural and Built Environments, University of South Australia, North Terrace, Adelaide, South Australia 5000, Australia. Tel: +61 8 8302 2379; FAX: +61 8 8302 2252; Email: George.Zillante@unisa.edu.au

Abstract
Project culture is raised as a general concept in some academic papers and industry reports. Those studies indicate that project culture is very important for the processing of construction projects; however, they do not provide a clear definition of project culture. In addition, there is no model that specifically examines the project culture of each construction project. This paper reviews the literature about cultural studies in a construction projects context, especially the culture at project level. A modified version of the current and generally used organizational culture model is suggested after the literature review. Finally a pilot case study was conducted to test the suggested model as well as the research instrument that will be used in further studies. The results show that the waste derived from the inappropriate behaviours/attitudes of the project participants can be minimized by creating a positive project culture. As a result, the value of the client/project will be improved.

Keywords
Project culture, Construction projects, Value, Case study

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the increasing complexity of construction projects has led to an increasing demand for quality from clients (Miron and Formoso, 2003). Value for money has become one of the most important project success factors, especially for the public sector projects.

Value management has been recommended as a structured approach for the assessment and development of a project in order to increase the likelihood of achieving the client’s optimum requirements of whole of life value for money (Green, 1999; Cheng et al., 2001; McGeorge et al., 2002; Shen et al., 2004; Fong, 2004).

Lean thinking has also been applied in the construction industry in order to better meet customer needs (value) while using less of everything (Howell, 1999).

Both value management and lean thinking require appropriate supportive behaviour and attitude from all participants. This is known as cultural issues within the project team. A number of studies have been conducted to examine the influence of culture at the different levels (e.g. national culture, organizational culture) on construction management practice (Pheng and Leong, 2000; Hartmann and Girmscheid, 2004). In the construction context, cultural studies have also been undertaken at both the industry and professional levels. For instance, adversarial relationships, fragmented approaches and confrontational relationships are identified as forming the culture within the construction industry (McGeorge, Palmer and London, 2002). There are