POWER, LEADERSHIP AND CULTURES IN QUANTITY SURVEYING PRACTICES IN HONG KONG

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Abstract
This paper addresses issues of how leadership operates, the nature of the power of leaders and the organisational cultural environments amongst quantity surveying consultant practices in Hong Kong. Due to resource limitations, a survey design was employed for the research. Data collection was achieved through use of previously-developed and well-tested questionnaire instruments which were adapted for use in context following piloting. Separate questionnaires were used for each of the main categories of variables. Results show that leadership in quantity surveying practices in Hong Kong is mostly supportive which fosters good morale and performance amongst subordinates; negative impacts were detected for directive leadership. Quantity surveyors are relationship-oriented with expert power as the most important source. The practices exhibit hierarchical organisational culture, although market culture is strongest amongst younger firms. Overall, results suggest movement towards clan culture, the expressed preference of participants.

Keywords
Leadership, organisational culture, power, quantity surveying

INTRODUCTION

The effective and efficient operation of any organisation depends upon networks of socially-determined business relationships which occur both intra-organisationally and inter-organisationally. Such relationships are impacted by the characteristics of the persons involved and the plurality of situational variables. Power and leadership are important, culturally dependent behavioural characteristics with extensive consequences for organisation performance, success, and, ultimately, survival.

Although power and leadership are intimately related, they are, nonetheless separate and individual constructs, each of which merits separate examination to foster appreciation of their operational variables as well as the interactions between them. National and organisational cultures provide both underpinnings of power and leadership and determine the contexts and interactional environments in which they must be exercised, thereby generating the situations in which the success of organisational management must be gauged: further, what success actually means (and to whom) must be determined.

Cultures, national and organisational, are dynamic (Hatch, 1993); in Hong Kong a variety of important changes have occurred over recent years, including the reversion of ultimate governance to mainland China and the ‘Asian financial crisis’ of 1997/8. Further, the role of quantity surveyors is changing with many of the larger firms undertaking wider functions relating to realisation of construction projects, such as life-cycle costing functions and more involvement in project management aspects. That evolving environment suggests changes in