

Chapter 41

Understanding the Dimensions of IT Governance Culture

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ABSTRACT

The concept of IT governance culture is relatively new. In this paper, the authors develop an IT Governance culture model based on Detert et al's (2000) framework involving eight dimensions of culture. Each dimension is described in terms of how they relate to the implementation of IT governance initiatives. The authors' contribution is to illustrate the utility of the framework by linking the eight general cultural dimensions to propose a normative model of ITG values and beliefs, that they argue, represent the 'ideal organisational culture' of successful ITG implementations. By doing so, they present a necessary step in developing the dimensions of the concept of ITG culture and moving products such as COBIT5 towards a more comprehensive framework based on systemic empirical research.

INTRODUCTION

A current and important topic in IS research is that of IT Governance. According to Debreceeny (2013), IT governance (ITG) is defined as the process by which organisations seek to ensure that their investment in information technology facilitates strategic and tactical goals. IT governance is a subset of broader corporate governance, focusing on the role played by information technology within the organisation. The ITG domain is quite well served by guidance and governance frameworks designed to provide structure and good practice statements that organisations can adopt and adapt to enhance their performance. These include ISO 38500 and COBIT (ISACA 2012). These frameworks are themselves potential objects for research in ITG (Debreceeny, 2013).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-5201-7.ch041

The COBIT framework, now in its fifth iteration, is an influential ITG framework. COBIT5 is designed to provide structure for governance decision making across the complete lifecycle of investment in information technology. COBIT 5, while building on the foundation of earlier versions (e.g., domains, business processes, maturity models, RACI charts), contains some significant changes in its design and implementation. There are, for example, markedly enhanced mechanisms for aligning organisational goals with IT goals and IT delivery (Debreceeny, 2013). While the role of organisational issues was recognized in earlier versions, COBIT5 now explicitly reflects the reality that organisational issues and enablers are important for the successful implementations of IT governance. Successful adoption of ITG is challenging and yet we know very little about what constitutes a successful path to ITG (Debreceeny, 2013).

According to the ISACA (2012), their latest version of COBIT contains an acknowledgement that efficient and effective governance and management of enterprise IT require a holistic approach. According to the ISACA, this approach takes into account several interacting components: processes (to ensure tasks are coordinated and integrated), structures (organisational unit and functions), and attention to people and relational aspects (culture, values, beliefs, etc). According to the ISACA, culture and behaviour of individuals and of the enterprise are very often underestimated as a success factor in governance and management activities. Given this acknowledgement, and the limited academic research that leverages or explores the concept of IT Governance culture as the unit of analysis (Wilkin and Cenhall, 2010), this paper's aim is to develop the concept of ITG culture and propose a model based on systemic empirical research.

Research suggests it is important that there is a fit between the ITG framework and the organisation's culture if there is to be a smooth implementation (El-Mekawy et al, 2012; Janssen et al, 2013). Thus, organisational culture is potentially a very important factor in ITG implementations and deserves further study. However, existing research has largely focused on culture at the national level (Leidner and Kayworth, 2006) which has left gaps at the organisational level for work which can investigate how an organisation's culture can affect the successful implementation of ITG implementations. The limited research to date also falls short of identifying what elements of culture are important in affecting ITG implementations.

This research explores how differing dimensions of culture can potentially influence a successful ITG implementation. The study contributes to the body of information systems knowledge by synthesizing data from the literature and a focus group, to develop a cultural configuration that shows the dimensions of culture that facilitate an ITG implementation initiative. This cultural configuration provides a theoretically grounded basis upon which future research about the role of culture in ITG implementation can be built.

The organisation of this paper flows from general to specific and from descriptive to normative. The remainder of this article is organised as follows. The next section provides necessary background to the types of factors that can influence IT governance effectiveness. A discussion of organisational culture is used as the basis for constructing the proposed ITG culture framework. The following section provides the conceptual framework by over-viewing the cultural terms we use, including a description of Detert' *et al's* (2000) eight dimensions of culture. Based on the literature and a focus group, we propose a model based on normative dimensions that have been used to define the ideal culture of an IT Governance organisation. The last section provides our enhancements to the IT governance culture enabler in COBIT5.

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