

Entrepreneurial Culture for Effective Human Resource Management

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***Abstract:** The concept of entrepreneurial culture has existed for decades and described as an organizational culture embodying and championing entrepreneurial characteristics and attributes. These have included risk-taking, innovation, and creativity; the elements one would expect to see among entrepreneurs as individuals. This paper explores the integration of entrepreneurial culture into Human Resource Management (HRM) to enhance organizational effectiveness and innovation. An entrepreneurial culture, characterized by values such as innovation, proactiveness, and risk-taking, can significantly influence HR practices by encouraging HR professionals to adopt forward-thinking and adaptive approaches. By aligning HR strategies with entrepreneurial principles, organizations can foster a dynamic and responsive workforce capable of navigating and capitalizing on emerging opportunities. The paper argues that such a cultural shift not only improves employee engagement and retention but also drives sustained competitive advantage and business growth. Key insights from the literature highlight the importance of nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset within HR to develop innovative HR practices, anticipate future trends, and effectively manage change. This paper examines the critical role of entrepreneurial culture in transforming HRM into a strategic partner in achieving organizational success.*

***Keywords:** Entrepreneurial Culture, Innovativeness, Risk-Taking, Human Resource Management*

INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture is a fundamental component of any organization, functioning as a powerful tool that shapes employee behavior and fosters a sense of identity and decision-making autonomy. In the contemporary landscape, no organization is immune to the forces of relevance, competitiveness, and constant change. To navigate these challenges, organizations must reevaluate their behaviors and practices, focusing on renewal and expansion to strengthen their international market position. Such practices contribute to what is known as entrepreneurial orientation (Zouhayer, 2013).

Ravasi and Schultz (2006) describe organizational culture as a collection of shared mental assumptions that guide interpretation and actions within organizations by defining appropriate behaviors for various situations. Despite each company having its own unique culture, larger organizations often experience diverse and sometimes conflicting subcultures due to varying management team characteristics. Organizational culture can have both positive and negative aspects. According to Sadri and Lees (2001), a positive organizational culture offers significant benefits and a competitive edge, whereas a negative culture can impede organizational

performance and hinder the adoption of necessary strategic or tactical changes, potentially obstructing future organizational evolution.

Van der Post et al. (1998) investigated the relationship between organizational culture and financial performance in South African firms. Their findings revealed a positive correlation, indicating that financially successful firms often possess distinct cultural dimensions compared to less effective firms.

Birkinshaw (2003) emphasizes the importance of organizational culture and management style in fostering entrepreneurship. Kuratko, Hornsby, Naziger, and Montagno (1993) highlight that an entrepreneurial culture is vital for instilling an entrepreneurial spirit within organizations. Naranjo-Valencia, Jimenez, and Sanz-Valle (2011) identify entrepreneurial culture as a key determinant of innovation strategy, suggesting that organizations should align their values and norms with their strategic objectives. Thus, organizational culture is central to sustaining entrepreneurial activities and should be analyzed alongside the concept of entrepreneurial orientation (EO).

Entrepreneurial culture is characterized by and promotes entrepreneurial traits such as risk-taking, innovation, and creativity. It is often seen as the antithesis of bureaucratic or administratively focused organizations (Bradley, Wiklund, & Shepherd, 2011). Attributes of an entrepreneurial culture have been positively linked to firm performance (Flamholtz, 2001; Flamholtz & Kannan-Narasimhan, 2005). Broader conceptual models identify entrepreneurial culture as essential to a firm's ability to pursue entrepreneurial strategies, including opportunity-seeking and advantage-seeking activities (Ireland et al., 2003). However, there is limited research on the relationship between the entrepreneurial culture concept and the firms exhibiting this phenomenon, particularly regarding which firms possess an entrepreneurial culture and to what extent.

The significance of entrepreneurship to economic development is well-documented (Davidsson et al., 2006), and it is widely recognized that education and training opportunities are crucial in nurturing future entrepreneurs and enhancing the capabilities of existing entrepreneurs to grow their businesses successfully (Henry et al., 2003).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial Culture

Birkinshaw et al. (1998) defined entrepreneurial culture as an organizational context that promotes behaviors like initiative. This definition is confined to a business setting. Similarly, Prabhu (2005), Conrad (1999), and Dulcic (2003) also described entrepreneurial culture as a type of organizational culture, with Dulcic further explaining it as a combination of factors shaping an entrepreneur's personality. Beugelsdijk (2007) and Chen and Lin (2006) characterized entrepreneurial culture based on entrepreneurial traits, while Benneworth (2004) noted that it reflects localized social norms and accumulated economic success, which are difficult to replicate elsewhere. These varying perspectives on entrepreneurial culture, grounded in established business contexts, limit their applicability to the broader development of entrepreneurship among individuals in society. Given governments' interest in promoting an entrepreneurial culture, it is important to understand how this concept can be applied to society at large.

Entrepreneurial culture combines the terms 'entrepreneurial' and 'culture.' Understanding these terms helps conceptualize the overall idea. Wickham (2006) described 'entrepreneurial' as an adjective illustrating how entrepreneurs approach their activities, suggesting a specific style in their actions. Atherton (2004) defined being entrepreneurial as a behavior that can manifest regardless of organizational involvement. Building on cultural knowledge, Brownson (2011) defined culture as a set of attributes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that can be learned or acquired across generations, individuals, and groups, distinguishing one group from another.

Entrepreneurial culture can thus be conceptualized as a society where individuals exhibit entrepreneurial attributes, values, beliefs, and behaviors, setting them apart from others. Fostering this culture requires government policies that promote these entrepreneurial traits, values, mindsets, and behaviors in individuals, influencing their attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Such policies aim to encourage entrepreneurial actions within established organizations and other life areas, ensuring individuals nurtured by these measures stand out from others, as culture inherently distinguishes different groups (Hofstede, 1980).

Dimensions of Entrepreneurial Culture

Organizational Enthusiasm

This aspect of organizational culture encompasses key traits such as excitement for achieving organizational goals, understanding the organizational vision, passion for the work, and unity of purpose. Organizational enthusiasm closely aligns with previous entrepreneurial culture concepts that emphasize having a vision and passion for the business (Shepherd, Patzelt & Haynie, 2010; Sundaramurthy & Kreiner, 2008). This concept is partly based on the entrepreneurial perspective towards work, the purpose of entrepreneurial organizations, and their overarching vision. For instance, Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen (2008) cited entrepreneurs who expressed a desire to "change the world" and "make the world a better place," similar to the vision of Apple's Steve Jobs (Aley, 2011; Dyer, Gregersen, & Christensen, 2008). However, while many entrepreneurs may aspire to significant societal or global impact, there is a notable difference between most entrepreneurs and figures like Steve Jobs. For example, Apple's size and scope lend a different weight to its visionary goals compared to smaller organizations.

Vision in entrepreneurship also involves identifying customer needs and opportunities, developing systems to assess the external environment, setting appropriate objectives and strategies, creating a shared vision, and formulating a mission to give the organization purpose (Sadler-Smith, Hampson, Chaston, & Badger, 2003). These practical and specific examples of vision align more closely with an entrepreneurial culture's work orientation, which focuses on opportunity-seeking, goal achievement, and a clear understanding of the organization's mission.

Similarly, passion is a critical individual aspect of entrepreneurs. While vision represents the organization's current position and future direction, passion refers to the enthusiasm and zeal entrepreneurs have for their ventures. Entrepreneurial passion is defined as "an entrepreneur's

intense affective state accompanied by cognitive and behavioral manifestations of high personal value" (Chen, Yao, & Kotha, 2009: 201). Passion significantly influences organizational dynamics and is a strong indicator of an entrepreneur's motivation to build a venture, persistence in pursuing goals despite challenges, ability to articulate the vision to employees, and capability to influence, persuade, and lead in growing the venture (Chen et al., 2009).

Stakeholder Alignment

Stakeholder alignment refers to the nature of an organization's relationship with its stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, partners, and investors. It involves focusing on building and nurturing supportive relationships with these stakeholders and recognizing the benefits these relationships bring to the organization. Traditional definitions of entrepreneurial culture have often overlooked the importance of stakeholder orientation, which is a significant oversight. The crucial role of stakeholder relationships has been highlighted extensively in entrepreneurship literature. Zott and Huy (2007) emphasized the importance of customer and supplier relationships and responsive customer service for new startups. Chen et al. (2009) noted that entrepreneurs need to be highly attuned to the perceptions of potential investors who scrutinize new ventures closely. Chatterji (2009) pointed out that managing credibility with potential new partners is essential for entrepreneurial ventures during their initial stages. Ozcan and Eisenhardt (2009) described how startups leverage their relationships with investors to develop their initial businesses. These studies underscore the vital role that managing stakeholder relationships plays for entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial ventures, implying its importance for entrepreneurial cultures as well.

Moreover, the significance of managing stakeholder relationships is reflected in cultural subtypes like Total Quality Management (TQM) and adaptive cultures. In these examples, achieving results important to stakeholders and satisfying their legitimate interests are seen as key organizational values. However, stakeholder alignment as a cultural dimension differs from stakeholder alignment as a strategy in the concept of a "moralist" stakeholder culture (Jones, Felps & Bigley, 2007). A "moralist" stakeholder culture embodies a genuine concern for the welfare of normative stakeholders—those for whose benefit the firm should be managed. In this perspective, stakeholder relationships are not merely strategic tools for achieving organizational goals but are seen as legitimate claims requiring good organizational management.

Learning & Development Support

This aspect of organizational culture is defined by values such as optimism about improvement, valuing efforts to learn and develop oneself and others, and a commitment to employee growth. This perspective is supported by past literature indicating that entrepreneurial cultures generally value continuous improvement, new ideas, and experimentation (Monsen & Boss, 2009; Shepherd et al., 2010). In entrepreneurial cultures, it is commonly believed that people often have valuable ideas and are motivated to enhance processes and seek new opportunities. For example, Dyer et al. (2008) noted that an entrepreneur observed young employees in his organization as being impressionable and inquisitive, as they did not yet know what to do and asked questions to understand better. This curiosity and desire to learn were seen as valuable and worth nurturing within the organization. Kotter (2001) described a CEO of an organization with an entrepreneurial culture that provided "high-potential" young employees with special training, diverse experiences, and significant exposure to top management. This approach suggests that employees were viewed

as adaptable and capable of learning from specialized training and mentorship. In an innovation-supportive culture, individuals' willingness to expose themselves to feedback and learn from others exemplifies a readiness to listen and grow.

Opportunity Driven Change

This facet is related to learning and development support yet distinct from it. Whereas learning and development support emphasizes personal improvement, opportunity driven change speaks to the core entrepreneurial features of innovation, creativity, and risk-taking with respect to products/services and processes. As indicated by Ireland, Hitt & Sirmon, (2003) definition of entrepreneurial culture, continuous change, the improvement of products/services and processes, and valuing innovation and risk-taking are seen as conveying new opportunities. Innovation in particular is strongly associated with entrepreneurship. This association is usually traced back to the work of Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) who defined the entrepreneur as an innovator and a person who carries out new combinations, in whatever position within a business (Van Praag, 1999). The process of innovation has been defined as "the development and implementation of new ideas by people who over time engage in transactions with others within an institutional context" (Van de Ven, 1986: 591). These notions of developing new ideas and taking a chance on them to seize new opportunities seem central to an entrepreneurial culture.

Cohesiveness

In the entrepreneurial culture literature and related subtype examples, collaboration, communication, and social interaction are identified as key cultural characteristics (Ketchen, Ireland & Snow, 2007; Salama, 2011). However, a related yet often overlooked aspect is the type of collaboration that arises from dealing with the shared struggles and adversities frequently encountered in entrepreneurial ventures. For instance, the collective effort during a startup phase, where entrepreneurs and early founding teams exert immense effort to get the venture operational (Carter, Gartner, & Reynolds, 1996), or the shared sacrifices necessary for the venture's survival in later stages (Haugh & McKee, 2004). Additionally, entrepreneurs often face struggles and adversities when challenging the market or industry status quo (Dyer et al., 2008).

An entrepreneurial culture necessitates collaboration and sharing, but it also requires more. Therefore, the facet of cohesiveness should encompass collaboration, communication, and sharing, as well as coordination and responsibility within the organization.

In entrepreneurial culture literature and related subtype examples, collaboration, communication, and social interaction are highlighted as crucial cultural elements (Ketchen et al., 2007; Salama, 2011). Yet, the specific type of collaboration that involves dealing with the shared struggles and adversities typical in entrepreneurial ventures is often overlooked. For example, the collective effort during a startup where entrepreneurs and founding teams go to great lengths to establish the venture (Carter, Gartner, & Reynolds, 1996), or the shared sacrifices necessary for the venture's survival at later stages (Haugh & McKee, 2004). Additionally, the struggle and adversity involved in challenging the status quo of a market or industry (Dyer et al., 2008) are significant.

Constituents of Entrepreneurial Culture

Entrepreneurial Attributes

Entrepreneurial attributes have been recognized as being of great importance in understanding and fostering entrepreneurship (Raab Stedha & Neuner, 2005). Attributes are indicators of entrepreneurial potentials. They can be acquired from both nature and nurture (Bridge et. al, 2009) thereby implying that every individual may have some entrepreneurial attributes though most of them may not realize it. As such, it may be in this respect that some government through policy instruments seeks to nurture entrepreneurial culture. Though it has been argued in the literature that entrepreneurial attributes are stable (Rauch & Frese, 2007), some researchers disagreed with the view by asserting that entrepreneurial attributes are changeable (Robinson, Stimpson, Huefner, & Hunt, 1991) in that individuals who one thought do not possess certain attributes could have such attributes developed via external triggers (ibid.) of which government policy measures are likely to trigger such changes in the participants of such measures. Entrepreneurial attributes allows a practical understanding of how entrepreneurial culture manifest itself (Lee-Ross and Mitchell, 2007).

Entrepreneurial Values

Kluckhohn (1967 cited in Kundu, 2009) defines value as a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristics of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of actions. Values are associated with standards of behaviour (Soanes et al., 2006) as such, entrepreneurial values are those values or standards of behaviour associated with entrepreneurs in which when nurtured can distinguish such individual from others. Values are the driving force for decision making (Keeney, 1994). They reflect the entrepreneurs conscious view (or belief) of him/herself and directly shapes his/her movement towards action or owns' motive (McClelland, 1965). Thereby implying that values can influence a person's mindset for actions on a behaviour. Kilby (1993) noted that values are instrumental in advancing the constructive understanding of human behaviour and consequent change. As such, personal values have important implications not only for the decision to pursue entrepreneurship but also in the way in which the individual entrepreneur approaches a venture (ibid.). Morris and Schindehutte (2005) pointed out that, values can become internalized in such a way that they affect entrepreneurial motives and behaviours. Scholars have found that variation in the prevalence of entrepreneurial values and beliefs affect the rate of new firm formation (Mueller, 2004) as such, these points to the importance of shaping individual's values towards entrepreneurship if the government is to attain their goal of job creation. Payne and Joyner (2006) identified three values prized by successful entrepreneurs which are integrity, honesty and work ethics.

Mourdoukoutas and Papadimitriou (2002) associated values such as autonomy, the freedom to act independently, innovativeness, freedom of experimentation, risk taking, proactiveness, ability to take initiatives and competitive aggressiveness with entrepreneurship. Tambunan (1999 cited in Shariff and Peou, 2008) found that small business owner-managers having entrepreneurial values such as creativity, integrity, achievement, among others, were more likely to have superior performance in managing organizations than owner-managers without these values. McGrath et.al (1992) in their exploratory analysis of cultural differences between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs concluded that entrepreneurs share a common set of values despite their different cultural backgrounds. As such intervention should seek to increase the social recognition of entrepreneur's value to aid in the fostering of entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurial Mindset

Mindset is a mental attitude which determines how an individual will interpret and respond to situations (Wordweb, 2009). It is defined as learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object (Schwarz, Wdowiak, Almer-Jarz, & Breiteneker, 2009). Fisbein and Ajzen (1975) posited that attitude is one of the psychological systems that cannot be seen completely through actions but, can only be seen through actions shown impliedly but not made explicitly in an individual. Attitude provides the foundation for human motivation and personal accomplishment (Kristansen and Indarti, 2004). Therefore, the question here is can an individual's mindset be nurtured in a particular direction? Robinson *et al.* (1991b) explained that attitude is dynamic in nature and due to this nature implies that it changes across time and from situation to situation. The rate of change varies depending on how deep seated or fundamental the attitude is to the individual's identity. Therefore, by being interactional, attitudes influences and are influenced by experiences we have, actions we take, and how we think and feel about those experiences (*ibid.*). This implies that individuals who participate in any designated government policy in their bid to foster entrepreneurial culture may have a change of mindset towards entrepreneurship (Schwarz *et al.*, 2009). As previously stated that the constituents of entrepreneurial culture are related to each other, attitude has been found to be related to entrepreneurial behaviour (Krueger, 1993).

For instance, Luthje and Franke (2003) suggested that if public policies seek to raise the number of new entrepreneurs, an improvement of individual's attitude towards entrepreneurship is an effective level. Moen, Rahman, Salleh & Ibrahim (2004) recommended that programmes should aim at cultivating attitudes towards entrepreneurship as a person may have the business knowledge but without a positive attitude about entrepreneurship, they may not plunge into the field as such a change in their attitude with more positive aspects towards the entrepreneurial field should be emphasized thoroughly to produce more entrepreneurship among participants (*ibid.*). In the same vein, Walstad and Kourilsky (1998) added that those who wish to foster entrepreneurship must support and reinforce the perceptions that it is personally feasible, and socially and personally desirable. Empirically, studies have also linked entrepreneurship programmes to a change in attitude towards entrepreneurship. For instance, Hatten and Ruhland's (1995) study of students' attitude towards entrepreneurship in an SBI (Small Business Institute) programme found significant and positive changes in the students' attitude towards entrepreneurship emphasizing that participants in entrepreneurship programmes are more likely to become entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurial Behaviour

The creation of new venture is the central focus of entrepreneurship research (Samuelsson and Davidsson, 2009). New venture creation is sometimes referred to as the entrepreneurial behaviour/action, startup (*Ibid.*) as well as entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship has been used in the developed countries as one of the most effective means of tackling the problems of unemployment of which various empirical researches has affirmed. For instance, Lasch *et al.* (2007) found unemployment as one of the key factors that determines entrepreneurship. Pietrobelli *et al.*'s (2004) found relationship between self employment and emerging form of entrepreneurship, self-employment was not motivated by the desire to evade taxes, but rather an active role of the government was seen to have enhanced it (*ibid.*). Benus' (1994) study on the US self-employment assistance programme found that the self-employment programmes increased not only the

likelihood of entry into self-employment, but the likelihood of total employment as well as the duration of the employment.

Effective Human Resource Management through Entrepreneurial Culture

Entrepreneurial culture for effective human resource management refers to the integration of entrepreneurial principles and practices within the realm of HRM to foster innovation, proactiveness, and risk-taking behavior among HR professionals. This approach emphasizes the importance of HR professionals demonstrating traits such as creativity, forward-thinking, and willingness to take calculated risks to identify and capitalize on opportunities for value addition in HRM activities. The concept entails aligning HR strategies and practices with the organization's entrepreneurial orientation, encouraging HR professionals to pioneer new HR initiatives, anticipate future trends, and adapt to changing environments. Ultimately, by embracing an entrepreneurial culture, HRM can drive organizational growth, enhance employee engagement, and contribute to overall business success.

A firm's entrepreneurial orientation is exhibited through the extent to which managers and decision-makers exploit opportunities (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990), optimize resource use (Chadwick & Dabu, 2009), identify or create environmental opportunities, and effectively utilize organizational resources (Zahra et al., 2006). The behavioral approach to entrepreneurship, which primarily developed within the manufacturing context (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Wales, 2015; Zahra et al., 2006), conceptualizes entrepreneurship as a firm-level behavior characterized by innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking in strategic decisions.

Innovativeness involves a firm's propensity to engage in and support new ideas, experimentation, and creative processes that may lead to new products, services, or processes (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Proactiveness is the forward-looking, opportunity-seeking behavior that involves introducing new products or services ahead of the competition and anticipating future demand to create change and shape the environment (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001). Risk-taking entails taking bold actions by venturing into the unknown, borrowing to do so, and/or committing significant resources to ventures in uncertain environments (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). However, risk-taking does not imply reckless decision-making but rather an informed awareness of risks and how to manage them. This perspective allows for the reliable measurement and management of entrepreneurship (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Wales, 2015), overcoming the limitations of individual traits-based views of entrepreneurship.

Based on the behavioral entrepreneurship theory (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Zahra et al., 2006), this paper conceptualizes HR functional-level entrepreneurship as the extent to which HR professionals exhibit innovative, proactive, and risk-taking behaviors to create or exploit opportunities for value addition and optimize resource use in HRM activities. Building on Lumpkin and Dess's (1996, 2001) conceptualization, we define innovativeness as HR professionals' tendency to engage in and support new ideas, experimentation, and creative processes that may result in new HR practices. Proactiveness is the opportunity-seeking, forward-looking behavior to introduce new HR practices and anticipate future environmental changes. Risk-taking involves taking bold actions by venturing into the unknown and/or committing significant resources in uncertain environments.

CONCLUSION

Fostering an entrepreneurial culture within human resource management (HRM) is vital for driving organizational innovation, agility, and long-term success. By integrating the core principles of entrepreneurship—such as innovation, proactiveness, and calculated risk-taking—into HR practices, organizations can empower HR professionals to become key agents of change. This alignment not only enhances the ability to attract, develop, and retain top talent but also ensures that the workforce is engaged, adaptable, and prepared to meet future challenges. Embracing an entrepreneurial culture in HRM leads to the creation of dynamic HR strategies that are responsive to evolving market conditions and organizational needs. Ultimately, this cultural shift contributes significantly to achieving sustained competitive advantage, fostering a resilient organizational environment, and driving overall business growth.

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