



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Accounting, Organizations and Society

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/aos

The expressive role of performance measurement systems: A field study of a mental health development project

Robert H. Chenhall^a, Matthew Hall^{b,*}, David Smith^a

^a Department of Accounting, Monash Business School, Monash University, Australia

^b Department of Accounting, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom

A B S T R A C T

The management control systems (MCS) literature has long recognized the importance of values and beliefs (e.g., Ouchi, 1979; Simons, 1995). However, in this literature, values and beliefs are typically presented in the context of mission statements or company slogans that can play little substantive role in shaping actions and behaviors. In this paper we focus on how MCS can play a more active role in values expression, and examine the potential for performance measurement systems (PMS) to be used within organizations to express the values and beliefs of organizational members. This use of PMS, which we term its expressive role, is important as pluralistic and expressive forms of organizing are becoming more prevalent. Furthermore, prior research indicates that enabling the expression of values and beliefs by organizational members can generate energy and commitment that are important to the achievement of organizational objectives. In a field study of a mental health development project in a non-government organization, we examine the design and operational characteristics that are important for the expressive role of PMS. We also examine the interplay between the expressive role and the instrumental role of PMS and identify circumstances in which these roles can clash and/or be complementary.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

The management control systems (MCS) literature has long recognized that values and beliefs are important in the functioning of organizations (Ouchi, 1979; Simons, 1995). Scholars have questioned, however, whether those MCS often associated with values and beliefs, such as mission statements and company slogans, play any substantial role in shaping actions and behaviors (e.g., Argyres & McGahan, 2002: 48). Furthermore, even in contexts where MCS are envisioned to play a more prominent role, it is typically to promote conformance by organizational members with corporate values and beliefs espoused by senior management (Ouchi, 1979; Simons, 1995). In this

way, there has been little attention directed toward the possibility for MCS to play a more active role in values expression, particularly in the context of enabling a wider variety of organizational members (and not only senior managers) to express their beliefs and values as part of their work in organizations.

Attention to a more active role for MCS in values expression is important because recent research indicates that organizations are increasingly operating in more pluralistic contexts characterized by multiple objectives (Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2007). In this context, in addition to a purely instrumental rationale focused on the pursuit of specific objectives, organizations can have an expressive purpose (Berry, 2005; Etzioni, 1961; Frumkin, 2005; Schultz, Hatch, & Larsen, 2000). This expressive purpose reflects a focus on helping individuals to express their values, commitment and faith through

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: m.r.hall@lse.ac.uk (M. Hall).

their work in organizations (Frumkin, 2005; Gordon & Babchuk, 1959; Mason, 1996; Schultz et al., 2000).

A focus on the expressive dimension of organizations is consistent with emerging research attempting to reposition the role of organizational members' values, beliefs and emotions at work – not as a nuisance or obstacle to organizational progress, but rather as a potentially productive feature of the work environment (Boedker & Chua, 2013; Bolton & Houlihan, 2009; Dutton, Worline, Frost, & Lilius, 2006; Huy, 1999). In particular, research indicates that enabling the expression of values and beliefs by organizational members can generate energy and commitment, enhance learning and exploration of alternatives, and reduce value conflicts in ways that can aid the collective achievement of organizational objectives (c.f., Frumkin, 2005; Huy, 1999).

In this study we examine the potential for PMS to be used within organizations to express the values and beliefs of organizational members. In particular, we consider whether and how organizational members' involvement with PMS can potentially provide a context within which their values and beliefs can be expressed. This focus on organizational members' substantive engagement with PMS seeks to highlight a more active role for MCS in values expression, moving beyond the typically passive role ascribed to elements of MCS such as mission statements and slogans. We also seek to pay particular attention to the expression of values and beliefs held by a variety of organizational members, and not only on how PMS can be used instrumentally by senior managers to encourage conformance with corporate values and beliefs. Specifically, we address three interrelated research questions: Can PMS help organizational members to express their values and beliefs? If so, what design and operational characteristics of the PMS could help to facilitate this process? How does the expressive role of PMS relate to and/or conflict with an instrumental use of PMS in organizations?

To analyze the potential for an expressive role of PMS we conducted a field study of the development of a PMS in the Sri Lankan office of Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), a non-government organization (NGO) working in the field of international development. NGOs, like VSO, are characterized typically by the instrumental pursuit of specific objectives, such as poverty reduction and meeting other developmental goals related to health, education and empowerment. In addition, they are characterized by a salience of beliefs and values related to missions to help the disadvantaged, where organizational members participate in these organizations in order to help express their commitment to these values and causes (Frumkin, 2005; Mason, 1996). Our empirical setting provides us with a powerful lens through which to examine the potential for PMS to play an expressive role, as well as the way in which this expressive role relates to the instrumental use of PMS in organizations.

Our study contributes to the literature by developing and advancing understanding of the expressive role of PMS. We conceptualize this role as the capacity of a PMS to facilitate the display of a variety of values and beliefs held by organizational members. The findings from our

field study indicate that the ability of a PMS to enable organizational members to express their values and beliefs is related to specific design and operational characteristics. The creation of a 'playful' environment (c.f., Huy, 1999) in which the PMS operates, and a PMS that is easily accessible to organizational members, are both important in order for the PMS to operate in an expressive role. Prompting the expression of values and beliefs by organizational members is then facilitated by the indicators included in the PMS aligning with the important values and beliefs of organizational members, where the development of a close affinity between the specific values and beliefs of organizational members and the precise content and wording of those indicators is paramount.

Our identification and conceptualization of the expressive role of PMS contributes to the MCS literature (e.g., Simons, 1995) by exploring how values and beliefs can be discussed and expressed as part of MCS and how this actually shapes behavior. This is in contrast to, for example, MCS in the form of a mission statement that is neither referred to, nor thought about, by organizational members (e.g., Argyres & McGahan, 2002: 48). This focus also contributes to emerging research positioning the expression of organizational members' values and emotions as a potentially productive feature of the work environment (Boedker & Chua, 2013; Bolton & Houlihan, 2009; Dutton et al., 2006; Huy, 1999). In particular, our study provides insight into the way in which the expression of values through PMS can help the achievement of organizational objectives by mobilizing the energy, motivation and commitment that values expression can create (c.f., Dutton et al., 2006; Frumkin, 2005; Huy, 1999). Examination of the expressive role of PMS is likely to be important for those organizations that have an evident expressive purpose, such as NGOs, and for organizations more generally as pluralistic and expressive forms of organizing become more prevalent (Denis et al., 2007; Schultz et al., 2000; Huy, 1999; Dutton et al., 2006).

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The next section provides the theoretical framework for the study. The third section details the research method. The fourth section provides information on the case context, with the fifth and sixth sections presenting our empirical analysis from our field study. In the final section we discuss our findings and provide concluding comments.

Theory development

Our conceptualization of the expressive role of PMS has its roots in literature seeking to distinguish between expressive and instrumental organizations, a typology first adopted by Gordon and Babchuk (1959). An expressive organization is one whose activities can help individuals to express their values, commitment and faith through their work, while an instrumental organization is one designed to maintain or create some normative aim (Frumkin, 2005; Gordon & Babchuk, 1959; Mason, 1996).

Recent research has indicated that rather than being either purely expressive or purely instrumental, organizations can operate in more pluralistic contexts characterized

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات