# Leadership and Culture, the dynamics of context: Applying theory to a Military and Business context.

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## Abstract

Business journals, academic reviews and various articles frequently compare and contrast the military organisational form with that of non military organisations. This paper examines the work of Cameron and Quinn (1999) whose research was centred around the need for organisations to mange cultures effectively and to manipulate change of cultures in order to survive. They quote 'of the largest one hundred companies at the beginning of the 1900s, only sixteen are still in existence. Of the firms in the Fortune Magazine's first list of five hundred biggest companies, only twenty-nine firms would still be included. During the last decade, 46 percent of the Fortune's 500 dropped off the list' (Cameron and Quinn, 1999). They have suggested that this phenomenon is due to the inability to effectively manage organisational culture. Cameron and Quinn offer a useful definition of what culture is: 'an organisational culture is reflected by what is valued. The dominant leadership style, the language and symbols, the procedures and routines, and the definitions of success that make an organisation unique'. It is recognized that organisations, especially large organisations, often have subcultures. These are described as 'subunit cultures' which 'also contain core elements of an entire organisation's culture in addition to their own unique elements (e.g. Alpert & Whetten, 1985). There is always an underlying glue that binds the organisation together (Schein, 1985; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991)

Cameron and Quinn (1999) developed a framework for identifying and evaluating organisational culture. They reviewed how such cultures perform and evolve, the types of leaders they attract and the types of behaviours which were valued. The four key classifications were, adhocracy, clan, hierarchy and market culture. Each had characteristics which suggested greater suitability for particular types of environments. The work can be compared to organisational life cycles which chart the development of an organisation, such as a start-up business which develops into a multinational company. The key is the development of cultures based on behaviours and illustrated that effective change can only be achieved through the management of culture.

The changes in organisations are often initiated by a variety of influences: some being induced, such as by a restructuring or merger, and others perhaps driven by external influences including market forces or competitive action. Whatever the cause, the requirement to understand how the organisation may react, both as a corporate body and also as individuals is paramount to achieving a successful adaptation to the new situation. The changing context often requires the transition of the organisational state from one form to another. As context emerges from this change the individuals adapt and interpret their new environment within the developing context and this is often manifested through changing cultures. This can be a haphazard affair with collectives developing attitudes and behaviors which are not compatible with the new environment. An example of such catastrophic developments can be identified in the 1970's British car industry where the unionized workforce were not prepared to adapt to the new competitive market environment. The culture which existed within companies such as British Leyland made the development of competitive practices almost untenable. It is therefore critical that organisational leaders understand the imperative of managing cultures, the impact that change may have on individuals and therefore collective performance.

This work examines the transformation which takes place within a British Army unit as it moves from training in barracks to pre-deployment training. The work examines the changing nature of the individuals and the leadership styles that are best suited to this transformation. The key is the deliberate change-management methods which are utilized to perform this task

and how the military moves from one organisational form to another whilst still maintaining cohesion and focus. It is through this work that the debate as to whether transference of the military metaphor is possible and to what degree of utility any such lesson can be applied to business is to take place. The paper concludes that leadership is paramount, not only through the understanding of the management of change and the manipulation of organisational culture, but also through the very nature and characteristic traits of the leader. The four quadrants of Cameron and Quinn suggest that each has an optimum leader who is best suited to leading that type of organisation.

Arguably there may well be leaders who are fit for purpose; that is they exhibit the types of leadership qualities that best fit an organisation within a given stage of its development. However, leaders may be specialists in change and this would introduce another style to the four previously mentioned, Kanter (1985) has long been a prophet relative to the crucial importance of leaders being change agents, stating that all leaders must develop an understanding and high degree of competence in creating and managing change so that their organisations can survive. This statement would imply that all leaders would need to have change capabilities as a core competence. Wheatley (1992) notes how change is the essence of the new global environment, and new leaders need to order, not control, chaos. The author recognises that through any form of implementation process change is an inevitable factor, and forms an important consideration within any such programme.

The author is presently examining these topics through a research programme that benchmarks the experience of Territorial Army officers, and identifies how they have managed change-management programmes within the work place. It is intended to draw comparisons between the policies of the British Army's pre-deployment training and those of the TA managers methods of change-management, in their business lives. This work will examine if the types of leaders are specific to context and whether the key themes identified in the British Army are adapted for their non-military environments. Some of the key themes will include detail briefing, mentoring, self directed working groups, lines of communications and also focus on an end state which individuals can identify with. It is contended that through the shaping of context by articulation of intent successful change-management can be achieved.

This paper is intended to create debate and develop dialogue around the central issue of leadership within changing context and the author's contention that a universal principle of successful and enduring leadership is the ability to create and sustain trust. It would be valuable to discuss and review other researchers' views and conclusions in order to build insight into enduring leadership principles.