Identifying traditional managerial attitudes towards decision-making processes in project organisations

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Seldom disputed is the reality that Iran is rapidly evolving from a “traditional” culture/society into that of a modern industrial state. The adoption of advanced manufacturing technologies (AMT) is transforming the Iranian “man–traditional–work” into Human-Systems Engineering (HSE) or, as it is also labelled, “human machine systems”. Companies in Iran (and in other industrially developing countries, IDCs) face challenges caused by the complexity of AMT and the competitive demands of the international market. This necessary change process is being significantly slowed and complicated by a resistance caused by lingering man traditional values at all levels in Iranian society. Technological projects abound in contemporary Iran. This “projectification” demands a more sophisticated, stylized thinking about project work both technologically and within a social/cultural context.

Along with pressures caused by the adaptation of HSE methods, a continuing technological and organisational change is coming into conflict with the country’s traditional culture/society. AMT, in aiming to solve social/economic problems, is continually colliding with prevalent “pre-industrial” attitudes toward technological project management (PM). This clash between disparate value systems is producing unforeseen and unintended consequences with immense and lasting human, social and economic costs. For example, the problematic consequences of “traditional” Iranian PM attitudes towards AMT for total quality management (TQM), total productive maintenance (TPM), the organisation, and employee welfare are only beginning to be recognised and understood. TQM pays little attention to the existing organisational structure that needs to be in place to make quality happen (1, 2, 3), and it has little to say about how to implement managerial change successfully where people have different interests and values (4, 5). PM for newly adopted technologies and a new labour force with new features is struggling to emerge. The HSE required by technological projects is making increasing challenges and demands upon: new PM when implementing complex AMT projects, HSE, sophistication of the work force and the quality of working conditions for skilled/semi-skilled workers. The combination of education, skills (competence, and qualifications) of local project managers and the labour forces they manage is - and will be even more - a determinant factor in the success or failure of organisational changes. The increasing complexity of various professions and sectors mean that
managerial qualifications/sophistication within the knowledge area of project organisation/management is also becoming increasingly complex. As a consequence, a structural transformation is going on where professions and knowledge of business with relatively high requirements is growing, while in other, more traditional areas, it is stagnating or shrinking.

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