

Keynote Speech

Research Culture

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Today is a great day for all of you. Let me offer my sincere wishes to you. I appreciate your being here. The key person behind the organization of today's event is Professor HemanthaKottawattawho requested me to deliver a keynote speech on *Research Culture* which is not a usual topic of discussion.

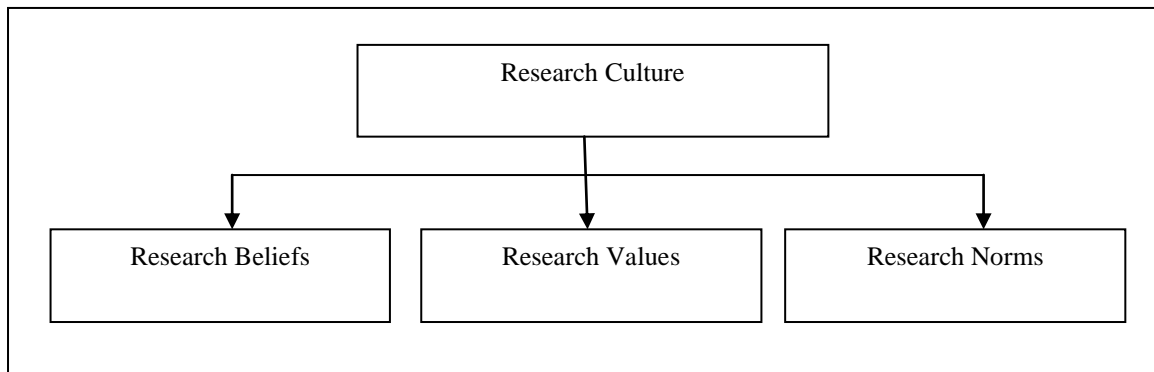
Research is a detailed study of a subject or an aspect of a subject. It involves collecting and analysing facts and information with the purpose of gaining new knowledge or new understanding with regard to what is being researched. It is indeed an intensive activity and it is usually based on the work of other researchers aiming at generating new ideas to pursue and questions to answer. Here the emphasis is Human Resource Management Research (HRMR). HRMR is a systematic activity to find answers for specific questions in relation to a particular HRM problem that has been specified lucidly.

Research culture is defined as the set of shared beliefs, values, and norms in respect of development of research. These shared beliefs, values, and norms influence the way relevant members or academics perform. Three important characteristics of research culture are:

1. **Beliefs** (convictions/assertions taken as true): Doing research is an essential duty. Without research there is no creation of knowledge. Academic life is composed of research. Experience in doing research results in high quality teaching.
2. **Values** (guiding principles/desired states sought): Good quality in research, adequate validity and reliability of measures used in research, high trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry, considerable academic and empirical significance, adhering to ethics in research etc.
3. **Norms** (expectations for or standards of behaviour): Conducting at least one research systematically and/or scientifically per annum, publishing at least one research in a recognized journal per year, presenting findings of research before a recognized forum etc.

See the following Figure which shows three dimensions of research culture.

Figure-1: Three Dimensions of Research Culture



What is the importance of research culture? The Pali tenet “VijjaUppatthamSetta” (of things that arise knowledge is the greatest) is one of the most popular statements about our university, University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Hence the need of creating, storing, and disseminating knowledge is of utmost importance. Indeed, research culture will contribute immensely to create, store, and disseminate knowledge. Understanding the below mentioned five reasons for doing research indicates the importance of research culture to a significant extent.

1. To find out the truth that is hidden or which has not yet been discovered in relation to aspects of HRM.
2. To expand the existing body of knowledge of HRM.
3. To understand the basic everyday phenomena which need to be handled in managing people at work in an organisation.
4. To provide a good basis for right HRM decision making.
5. To generate empirical support to a theory of HRM.

Research culture is indeed important as it affects research and teaching behaviour in an organization, particularly in an academic organization or an academic department. It has a significant influence on thinking, feelings and behaviours of academic employees in a particular department/faculty/university. Also it has a direct impact on academic employees’ job performance. Many universities owe their success to a conducive and strong research culture. Research culture can powerfully shape an academic department’s long-term success.

In fact research culture does several important specific functions in an academic department.

1. Research culture provides a sense of identity for academics of the department.

A strong research culture makes academic members of an organization feel that they belong to a particular group. It has beliefs and values which make academics of a department feel that they are different from others.

2. Research culture reminds academics about the university’s strategic needs (vision, mission and goals) and generates their commitment to them.

Members of an organization may find it difficult to go beyond thinking of their own interests. A strong research culture makes members understand that the organization’s interests are superior to personal interests and reminds members about the need of striving for accomplishment of strategic needs of the organization. The strong culture generates members’ commitment to the strategic needs of the organization to a significant extent.

3. Research culture specifies and reinforces acceptable behaviour.

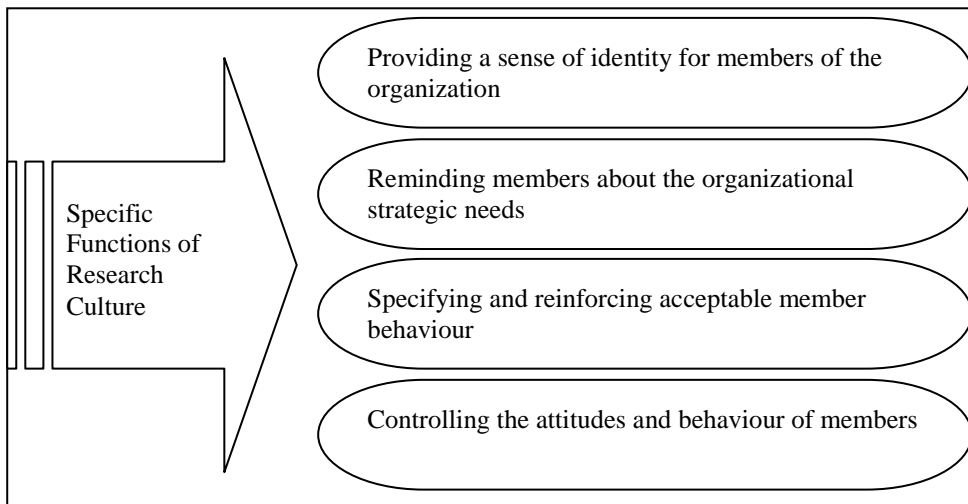
Beliefs, values and norms teach members including newcomers regarding what they should do (appropriate standards of behaviour). A strong research culture gives specific guidance regarding how members are expected to behave on the academic arena.

4. Research culture controls attitudes and behaviour of members.

Culture serves a sense-making and control mechanism guiding and shaping the attitudes and behaviour of members. A strong research culture provides a set of core values and implicit rules that govern research behaviour of members.

The above mentioned four functions highlight the importance of research culture. Figure-2 presents these specific functions of research culture.

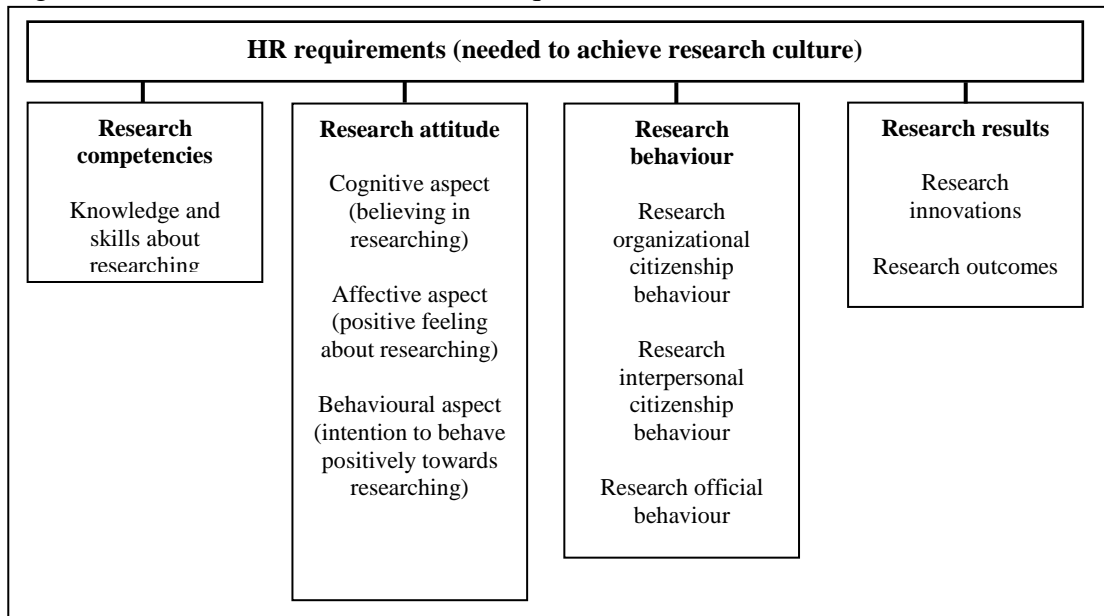
Figure-2: Specific Functions of Research Culture



What is the relationship between research culture and our primary mission? We are committed to prepare our students for meaningful professional and personal lives. We are committed to provide superior value in our services and products on a continuing basis. We are responsible for the Government that provides funds to the Department. Funds belong to the public generally. The Government and the general public expect efficiency and effectiveness from us. We strive for efficiency and effectiveness in our business of educating future managers and scholars in HRM today. We respect the individuality/uniqueness of each academic and foster an environment that encourages, values and recognises creativity and innovation. We are dedicated to value professional growth of academics and freedom of intellectual thought and expression. Research culture will in fact play a key role in fulfilling our mission.

What are the human resource requirements for creating and enhancing a research culture? I am in the view that there are four categories of human resource requirements, i.e. research competencies, research attitude, research behaviours and research results. Though these major types of research human resource requirements are related they can be distinctly treated. Figure-3 shows these requirements and relevant dimensions.

Figure-3: Research Human Resource Requirements



Academic member is required to possess a sufficient amount of knowledge and skills in respect of researching and without the relevant knowledge and skills (competencies) it is not possible for the member to become a good researcher. Also the member needs to have a right attitude of researching. Right attitude means appropriate beliefs (cognitive), feelings (affective) and intention to behave (behavioural) with regard to researching, and it should be identical to the one given in Exhibit-1.

Exhibit-1: An Illustration of Right Attitude

Cognitive: I believe in Researching. It is very important for creating and disseminating knowledge. It deals with collecting and analysing facts and information with the purpose of gaining new knowledge or new understanding with regard to what is being researched. I will be able to lead a very happy academic life by engaging in Researching.

Affective: I feel positively about the need of Researching. I like to working in Researching. I feel happy when I think and talk about Researching.

Behavioural: I intend to be a serious contributor to Researching. I will be in Researching. I hope to live with Researching. I am going to be a serious researcher.

A critical human resource requirement for creating and enhancing a research culture is researchbehaviour one dimension of which is research organizational citizenship behaviour that is defined as the extent to which the member engages in positive actions aimed at helping the university/department as a whole to achieve research culture. These actions do not become a part of formal job requirements. They primarily represent voluntary research actions. Examples of such actions:

- Read for an additional research degree to do a serious research.
- Undertake supervising research students voluntarily.

- Accept and perform reviewing of research papers done by others whenever possible.
- Undertake editing research work done by others.
- Perform coordinating research degree programmes without expecting any financial or other gains leading to get promotions.
- Organize research events without any financial gain.
- Serve as a chair or co-chair for a research conference.
- Serve as a chairperson for research sessions at research conferences.
- Serve as a careful listener to a research presentation and give constructive criticisms.
- Perform activities involved with publishing a research journal, research proceedings, or a book of abstracts.

Another dimension of research behaviour is research interpersonal citizenship behaviour that is defined as the extent to which the member engages in positive actions aimed at helping specific co-members to do their research work. These actions are not a part of formal job requirements and represent voluntary helps given by the member to other members at the similar level (peers) to become researchers or perform their research work. Examples of such actions:

- Stimulate others to become researchers.
- Answer questions asked by others about researching positively.
- Teach others about how to do research.

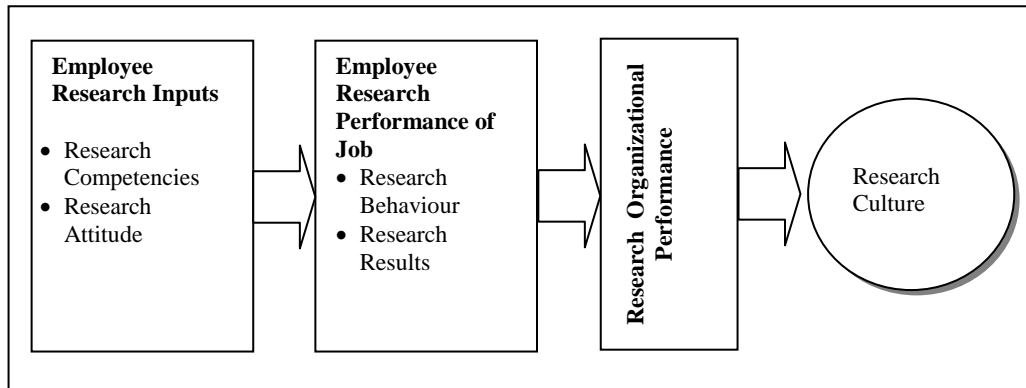
Research official behaviour is the third dimension of research behaviour and it is defined as the extent to which the member engages in official duties assigned by the superior with regard to researching. This engagement is not a voluntary one and it is an official requirement to be met by the member. The member is paid for this behaviour. Such duties include teaching courses on research methodology, doing supervision of research work done by students assigned by the Head of the department etc.

Research results are outcomes or outputs which are research-related. Research results are defined as the extent to which the member has produced research outcomes. Research results have the following two dimensions:

1. Research innovations: new research initiatives, new solutions for conducting research, new solutions for evaluating research work, new schemes for management of research supervision etc.
2. Research outcomes: number of hours of research supervision, number of research studies done, number of research papers published, number of abstracts published, quality of research papers, number of research based books published, number of research papers reviewed, number of journals published, number of research works edited etc.

Considering the above mentioned research human resource requirements, a concept is introduced namely Employee Research Performance of Job. It is defined as the extent to which a particular member has engaged in behaviours (actions and activities) and produced results in respect of researching during a particular period of time. Research competencies and research attitude are viewed as employee research inputs and research behaviour and research results are viewed as Employee Research Performance of Job which contributes to Research Organizational Performance meeting the creation and enhancement of research culture to a significant extent. See Figure-4.

Figure-4: Employee Research Inputs and Employee Research Performance of Job



There is a need for formulating and implementing certain strategies in order to create and enhance a research culture, particularly from the point of HRM. Some strategies which can be taken to institutionalize a research culture are given below:

1. To commence and run research degrees which impart right knowledge and skills about researching.
2. To evaluate academic's job performance according to research-related criteria.
3. To give financial incentives to academic employees for their good research performance of job.
4. To give non-financial rewards such as praises and recognitions to academic employees for their researching.
5. To organize and conduct continuously research events such as conferences and symposiums.
6. To create opportunities and provide facilities to publish research works in academic journals and as exclusive books.
7. To conduct various research workshops to impart latest knowledge and skills in research methodology.

May we be able to enhance our research culture!
 I wish you a better future!