RESEARCH ON WORK VALUES IN MALAYSIA AND THAILAND: A CROSS CULTURAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Wan Rafaei Abd Rahman

Introduction

The work values is a cultural norm that advocates being personally accountable and responsible for the work that one does and is based on a belief that work has intrinsic value (Cherington, 1980; Colson & Eckerd, 1991; Quinn, 1983; Yankelovich & Immerwahr, 1984). The work values, as we know it today, is a secularized construct derived from Weber’s (1904, 1905) Protestant work ethic (PWE) theory.

The PWE, asserting that Calvanist theology encourage accumulation of wealth, has been widely used as an explanation for the success of capitalism in Western society. Over the years, however, attitudes and beliefs supporting hard work have blended into the norms of Western culture, and are no longer attributable to a particular religious sect (Lipset, 1990; Rodgers, 1978; Rose, 1985). The elements of work values that of greatest significance in the preparation of people for work are the attitudes and behaviors ascribed to work ethic rather than a sectarian belief system that inculcates these characteristics.

Previous research has identified numerous affective characteristics considered desirable for working people. Beech, Kazanas, Sapko, Sisson, and List (1978) identified 63 affective work competencies considered important by industry leaders and educators and clustered them into 15 categories.

In Malaysia one could distinguish among four major values systems, each pertaining to a specific ‘ethnic group’, namely the Malays, the Chinese, the Indians, the Westerners. For example the values of the Malays, the single largest ethnic group in Malaysia, could be dealt with under the notion of budi.
According to the (Malay) anthropologist H.M. Dahlan, budi embodies all the virtues ranked in the system of values of the (Malay) society.

The structure of budi is composed of virtuous qualities, such as murah hati (generosity), hormat (respect), ikhlas (sincerity), mulia (righteousness), timbang-rasa (discretion), malu (feelings of shame at individual level). In social relation, these virtues imply that codes of conduct for politeness, refinement, and consideration for others would involve gestures, and intonations of speech that varied according to the hierarchical status of the person addressed.

In 1985, the Islamic values can bureaucratic self-conduct was expended from three to eleven. There included: trustworthiness, responsibility, sincerity, dedication, moderation, diligence, cleanliness, discipline, cooperation and gratitude. In 1992, the National Institute of Public Administration published "The Twelve Pillars" specifying twelve fundamental values that should guide the conduct of all Malaysia civil servants, namely, valuing time, perseverance, pleasure of working, dignity of simplicity, character, kindness, influence of examples, obligation of duty, wisdom of economy, patience, improvement of talent, and joy of originating (INTAN, 1992). The document's message was subsequently disseminated in the form of pamphlets, posters and calendars, and publicized in numerous speeches by senior managers. The subject became a compulsory element in human resource a development course for civil servants. The Thai values will be based on the work by Komin (1995) on The Nine Thai Value Orientation as shown in figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Nine Thai value orientation
- Ego orientation
- Grateful relationship orientation
- Smooth interpersonal relation orientation
- Flexibility adjustment orientation
- Religiosity orientation
- Education competence orientation
- Interdependence orientation
- Fun-pleasure orientation
- Achievement-task orientation
The present study is an extensive of studies by Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman & Che' Su Mustaffa (2002) and Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman & Che Su Mustaffa, Khairol Anuar Masuan, Mohamad Zaki Shamsuddin, Maznah Abu Hassan & Faizah Ahmad (2006) to examine the similarities and differences of work values in Malaysia and Thailand.

Method

Participants

Participants will be the teachers from secondary school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Bangkok, Thailand.

Development of instruments

A work values scale will be developed using items in The Twelve Pillars and The Nine Thai Values of orientation and based on dimensions introduced by Deal and Kennedy (1982) and O’Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991).

References

Cherrington, D.J. (1980). The work ethic: Working values and values that work. New York: AMACOM.


