

LEADERSHIP STYLES: A STUDY OF AUSTRALIAN AND THAI PUBLIC SECTORS

Nattavud Pimpa^{1*} and Timothy Moore²

¹*School of Management, RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria 3000 Australia*

²*The Nossal Institute for Global Health, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia*

Corresponding author: Nattavud.pimpa@rmit.edu.au

ABSTRACT

Leadership is deeply attached to culture. This study compares leadership styles in Thai and Australian public sectors. The data were collected from staff in public sector settings in Australia and Thailand. The results confirm four leadership styles that suit the public sector culture in both countries: communication-oriented, strategic thinking and planning, relationship building, and conflict management. In the Thai public sector system, leadership that focuses on goal orientation is ranked most highly: Australian public sector organisations focus on leadership that fosters equity among organisational members, creates a supportive environment in the workplace, and facilitates participation. It is evident from this study that significant distinctions between the organisational cultures of Thailand and Australia are matched by marked dissimilarities of preferred leadership styles. Thus, an understanding of local organisational culture is important for effective leadership at all levels.

Keywords: leadership styles, public sector, culture, Australia, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Modern organisations are complex and require flexibility in leadership and management. Leadership is dynamic, and is built by means of an ongoing process requiring considerable time and organisational resources and culture (Fleishman, Mumford, Zaccaro, Levin, Korotkin, & Hein, 1991; Wiersemama & Bantel, 1992). Previous studies on leadership and organisations affirm leadership's significant role in steering organisational culture and organisational change (Rymer, 2008). Conversely, organisational culture is pivotal in shaping leadership styles (Pors, 2008). Studies over the past four decades demonstrate the profound impact of organisational culture on the success or failure of an organisation's leadership, and that organisational culture and leadership are intertwined (Schein, 1992; Denison, 1996; Ogbanna & Harris, 2002; Pors, 2008).

The key challenge for modern organisations is to understand the strong influence of organisational culture on leadership styles and its direct and indirect effects on individual members of organisations. The complication of understanding leadership and the measurement of competency of leaders are reported as key factors contributing to slowness in organisational development (Yoon, Donahue, & Woodley, 2010).

Ogbonna and Harris (2002) proposed that researchers in management science and organisational studies should investigate, through comparative studies, the links among culture, organisations, human relationship and leadership. Previous studies, which attempted to identify the relationship between organisational culture and characteristics of leaders, have used narrow and similar cultural lenses.

Trompenaars and Wooliams (2003) found sufficient variation within any one country to know that it is very risky to speak of national, corporate or even functional culture in terms of simple stereotypes. Cultural differences are caused by differences in values (Dubrin & Dalglish, 2001). Leadership varies from culture to culture but being value-based, there is strong continuity within each society (Dubrin & Dalglish, 2001). Comparative study, therefore, can help organisations to understand the nature of leadership in each cultural context.

In addition, a study of international management from the perspective of not-for-profit organisations does not sufficiently elucidate these links (Rymer, 2008; Rojanapanich & Pimpa, 2011). Literature on cultural studies (i.e. Hofstede, 1984; Trompenaars & Wooliams, 2003; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997) identifies strong relationships between society, people, values and the institutions where they belong. Thus, leadership styles vary from place to place, according to local cultures and societal impacts. The level and degree of influence can be different from culture to culture, and the rest depends on various local cultural factors (Hofstede, 1984; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

Leaders in the public sector have a major impact on the formation of organisational culture and staff effectiveness. Despite the disparate nature and structure of governmental and for-profit organisations (Colley, 2001), it is apparent leaders' values and beliefs form the key values of the organisation in both sectors. Ogbonna and Harris (2000) proposed that leaders from not-for-profit and for-profit organisations alike could embed and transmit organisational culture through different mechanisms, for example coaching and role modelling. To what extent can culture influence the nature of leadership in the public sector? In particular, when we view leadership in the public sector through different cultural lenses, what will we see as the implications for international leadership?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2001) reported that most governments have adopted different approaches in the development of leadership in public sector. General trends of leadership development in international public sectors include developing comprehensive strategies (i.e. Norway, the U.K.), setting up new institutions for leadership development (i.e. Sweden, the U.S.), and linking the existing management training to leadership development (i.e. Finland). Leadership developmental strategies in public sectors confirm the important role of leadership in fostering the quality of governance in the public system. OECD also defines that culture plays an important role in all aspects of governmental leadership.

To confirm this point, a study by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) shows differences between three levels of culture and how each cultural level influence leadership. At the highest level is the culture of a national or regional society. They also confirmed its relationship with leadership styles and approaches. More importantly, studies in leadership (i.e. Shahin & Wright, 2004; Wart, 2003) show strong relationship between culture and the way in which attitudes are expressed within specific organisation (or organisational culture). At a narrower level there is the professional culture where people with certain functions will tend to share certain professional and ethical orientations (Shahin & Wright, 2004).

This paper focuses on Thailand and Australia; two different countries in socio-cultural and political backgrounds. Australia is described as a Western developed society where individualism, social equality and progression are seen as the social norm (Dorfman, 1996). In contrast, Thailand is perceived as a Buddhist, collectivistic and harmonious society (Edwards, Edwards, & Muthaly, 1995; Pimpa, 2009). Differences in these nations' organisational cultures and leadership styles can be expected. This study investigates this notion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership and Culture in Public Sector

Wyse and Vilkinas (2004) propose that public sector executive leadership roles have not been explored independently of private sector roles. It is more common for private sector research and models to be adopted by the public sector with little or no modification for the public sector context, even though differences between public and private sector demands on executives are acknowledged (Colley, 2001). This may associate with insufficiency in understanding of leadership roles and effectiveness in public sector.

Different leadership theories have been adopted to describe and measure complicated leadership behaviour in various cultural contexts (Politis, 2001; Hooijberg & Choi, 2001). Traditionally popular was the duality model of leadership; one dimension concerned with people and interpersonal relations and the other with production and task achievement (Wright & Pandey, 2010). Recent studies tend to employ a multi-perspective approach to investigate and explain the complexities of leadership in public institutions (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Glickman & Sergiovanni, 2006; Wright & Pandey, 2010).

Of all leadership models in public institutions, Sergiovanni's (1984) *Hierarchy of Leadership Forces* is one of the most adopted models in education and public sector. Sergiovanni (1984) identified and defined multiple school leadership dimensions as 'leadership forces' (leader and follower behaviours). The technical force describes the management functions espoused by the proponents of 'classical' management theory; for example, planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting. The human force concerns the supporting of people, encouragement of professional growth, and the building of morale. This is similar to the management ideology of human relations. The human relations approach to management requires a 'participatory' or 'democratic' management style by managers who are skilled in working with people. Leadership styles that suite the nature of public sector organisation is not clearly defined in his work (Sergiovanni, 1999; 2001). The model confirms that public organisations require certain aspects of leadership that may differ from for-profit organisations.

Although Sergiovanni's model proposes useful approaches in leadership for public sector, it fails to incorporate some important factors such as organisational culture and contexts, style and roles of leader. Organisational culture consists of ambient stimuli that are likely to prime role cognitions coherent with their content and direction (Cannella & Monroe, 1997). Research on national and organisational culture supports the importance of roles by demonstrating that culture influences the cognitive processes of individuals by intensifying the retrieval of perceptions consistent with the overall cultural values (Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991). This aspect, thus, require further investigation from the leadership's perspectives.

Yukl (1994) proposed that ineffective leadership in any organisation seems to be the major cause of diminishing the organisation's productivity and downward positioning of North American corporations on the international scale. It can be well-linked with organisational culture (Chia, 2002; Pors, 2008; Kefala, 2010). Indeed, leadership and organisational culture are purported to be tightly intertwined (Roberts, Ashkanasy, & Kennedy, 2003; Dorfman, 1996). Leaders

must have a deep understanding of the identity and impact of the organisational culture in order to communicate and implement new visions and inspire follower commitment to the vision (Schein, 1992).

In the public sector context, literature in leadership emphasizes the influence and effectiveness of transformational (over transactional) leadership (Schein, 1992; Ogbonna & Harris, 2002; Hooljberg & Choi, 2001; Wart, 2003; Pimpa, 2010). Hooljberg and Choi (2001) also reported that monitoring and facilitating roles of leader in the governmental organisations have a stronger impact on perceived leadership effectiveness than the use of forces and power. They also reported that transformational leadership is slightly more important in terms of both perceptions of leader effectiveness and follower satisfaction in the case of public sector.

Wright and Pandey (2010) reported that the structure of public sector organisations might not be as bureaucratic as commonly believed in the literature. Some bureaucratic had little, if any, adverse affect on the prevalence or practice of transformational leadership behaviours. They also confirm in their study that there is no relationship between transformational leadership behaviours and organisational red tape (or other aspects of organisational culture), even though organisational hierarchy and inadequate lateral or upward communication were associated with lower transformational leadership.

It seems to be the pattern of research in public sector to investigate the concept of traditional leadership (transactional/transformational leadership, traits and behaviour in leadership) in a particular setting. The comparative aspect between public sector organisations in different cultural backgrounds is lacking. From the research perspective, the comparison of leadership styles and approaches will lead to a better understanding of the effects of local and organisational culture on leadership effectiveness in public sector.

Leadership Thai-Australian Styles

A previous study on Thai style leadership (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001) indicates central-system leadership has remained powerful in the Thai public sector. Thailand is one of the countries in Asian of which Buddhism has deep roots in society. Harmony and peace are among key aspects in Thai life. An early study by Hofstede (1984) identifies four dimensions for which national cultures differ: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism-Collectivism, and Masculinity-Femininity. According to Hofstede's cultural map, Thailand ranks highly for all four dimensions. Hallinger and Kantamara (2001) asserted that Thais are collectivists and leadership that moves toward the direction of group

rather than the individual is effective in Thailand. In terms of goal orientation and leadership, Thailand is classified as a short-term goal society. Thais may prefer to look at planning as a short-term organisational strategy. Recent study on leadership in Thailand by Hallinger (2004) also indicates that Thai organisations may require leadership styles and practices that focus on personalities and traits of leaders.

Australian literature on leadership has tended to focus on leadership characteristics and styles (Rymer, 2008). Sarros (1992), a prominent scholar in this area, identified the relationship between the Australian concept of friend or 'mateship' as a major cultural factor determining Australian leadership style. Modern concepts of strategic leadership, vision or implementation began to affect Australian leadership at a later stage. Sarros (1992) also reported that many Australian managers identify adaptability as a key leadership trait. Roberts et al. (2003) reported in their study that Australian leaders are expected to be more socially-orientated and affiliate, and to place less emphasis on the work and/or outcome of the work. An interesting summary by Roberts et al. (2003) is:

Australia has been shown to have a very low Power Distance, stemming from the historical origins of Australia as a penal settlement. We therefore also expected to find in our analysis that the GLOBE data would reveal an emic leadership dimension interpretable as Australian egalitarianism.

Literature in public sector services in Australia illustrates that Australian public sectors appear to pay more attention to work in dynamic partnership with private and NGOs (Shergold, 2005). At the same time, Australian public sectors supposed to be responsive to community demands and have been placed under strict accountability regimes that demand almost excessive process requirements (Shergold 2005; Pimpa, 2010). Rymer (2008) also proposed that Australian organisations require different leadership approaches, due to the uniqueness of Australian culture and norms. This aspect of work certainly requires a new dimension of leadership.

Having established that the new aspect of leadership is required, little is known, however, about leadership style and culture within Australian and Thai public sectors. Previous studies in comparative leadership from the Australian and Thai perspective confirm differences in leadership styles and preferred leadership styles in different organisational cultures.

- H1: There are significant differences between Thai and Australian public sector officers regarding the perceptions of organisational culture.

- H2: There are significant differences in the perceived leadership styles between Thai and Australian public sector officers.

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this study is the effects of organisational culture on leadership styles in the Thai and Australian public sectors. A quantitative method is adopted to investigate the differences of organisational culture and leadership styles, and patterns thereof, for Thai and Australian public sectors. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that quantitative methods should be utilised when the phenomenon under study needs to be measured, when hypotheses need to be tested, when generalisations are required to be made of the measures, and when generalisations need to be made that are beyond chance occurrences.

Sample

The participants in this study were 134 Thai and 110 Australian civil servants, working in various public education organisations. In Thailand, the data were collected from civil servants and teachers from district educational offices and public primary schools in Central and Eastern Thailand; 117 females and 17 males. The majority (88.1%) had been in the public sector system for more than 10 years. Permission to collect data in Thailand was granted by the Thai Office of the Civil Service Commission and the Ministry of Education.

In Australia, the data were collected from teachers and staff in public primary schools in the Western and Eastern suburbs of Victoria State. The participants consisted of 73 females and 37 males, and majority of them (73%) had been in the public sector system for five to seven years. Permission to collect this data was granted by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Instrument Development

The instrument was a questionnaire composed of three parts: the first part related to organisational culture in the public sector (25 items); the second part tapped into different leadership styles (32 items); while the third part related to participants' demographic information (5 items). The organisational culture was developed from Hofstede's culture dimensions (1984) model. Leadership style scales were developed from various leadership theories from Hofstede (1984), Sergiovanni (1984), Hallinger and Kantamara (2000), Roberts et al. (2003), Rymer (2008) and Rojanapanich and Pimpa (2011).

Reliability comes to the forefront when variables developed from summated scales are used as predictor components in objective models (Reynaldo & Santos, 1999). To verify the inter-item reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha was conducted. Alpha coefficient ranges in value from 0 to 1 and may be used to describe the reliability of factors extracted from dichotomous (that is, questions with two possible answers) and/or multi-point formatted questionnaires or scales (i.e., rating scale: 1 = poor, 5 = excellent). The higher the score, the more reliable the generated scale is. Nunnally (1978) has indicated 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient but lower thresholds are sometimes used in the literature. In this case alpha coefficients higher than 0.7, demonstrated the high reliability of the instrument.

One of the ways in which to ensure acceptable content validity is to put it through a process of judgemental validation by experts in this area. This was done and, in this case, the experts were two academics in leadership and management, as well as two civil servants, one each from Thailand and Australia. They provided feedback that helped the researcher to reiteratively edit the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Two types of statistics are adopted in this study. Descriptive statistics are used to identify general characteristics of the participants, degrees of organisational culture and leadership styles. Furthermore, researchers adopted inferential statistics to compare differences among Thai and Australian leadership styles. A *t*-test was conducted to compare differences between Thai and Australian civil servants in regard to leadership styles and organisational culture. Confirmatory factor analysis was also used to analyse groups of correlate variables representing leadership styles in Australian and Thai public sector.

RESULTS

The analysis of organisational culture of both the Thai and Australian public sectors indicates that all five dimensions of organisational culture for Thailand are stronger than for Australia. "Uncertainty Avoidance" has the highest rating for the Thai public sector. In contrast, of the five dimension ratings, for the Australian participants "Goal Orientation" is highest ranked. The results confirm the Thai public sector may resist change and accept people because of their position at the top of management hierarchy. In terms of collectivism, the results show that members of neither Thai nor Australian public sector organisations are highly collectivists. In nature, nevertheless, Australian public sector organisations are more individualistic than Thai counterparts. Both Australian and Thai public

sector organisations are quite active and strategic in their operations. Regarding goal orientation, the findings show both Australian and Thai public sectors set long-term goals for their organisations. Table 1 demonstrates the comparisons between Thai and Australian public sector organisations.

Table 1
A comparison of organisational culture styles between Australia and Thailand

Organisational Culture	Thailand	Australia	<i>t</i>
Uncertainty Orientation	3.81	2.92	16.42**
Power Orientation	3.42	2.31	21.81**
Group Orientation	2.92	2.14	15.06**
Gender Orientation	2.35	1.43	11.97**
Goal Orientation	3.67	3.53	7.73**

** $p \leq 0.01$

When the mean-scores are compared by means of a *t*-test, it is found that the nature of organisational culture among Thai and Australian public sector differ significantly in Uncertainty Orientation ($t = 16.42, p = 0.00$), Power Orientation ($t = 21.81, p = 0.00$), Group Orientation ($t = 15.06, p = 0.00$), Gender Orientation, ($t = 11.97, p = 0.00$), and Goal Orientation ($t = 7.73, p = 0.00$). The results confirm that local cultures, Thai and Australian, tend to have different effects on the national public sector system. Thus, H1 is accepted.

It is apparent that leadership styles are valued differently by public sector officers from Thailand and Australia. The Thai public sector prefers task-focused leadership, and gives high regard to leaders who assist and guide staff to focus on the task at hand. Public sector officers in Australia prefer supportive and participative leadership styles.

The analyses also confirm a number of differences in terms of leadership styles among Thai and Australian public sector organisations. With respect to participative leadership style, the results confirm a significant difference between Thai and Australian public sector organisations ($t = -2.31, p = 0.02$). Further analysis also confirms significant differences in leadership styles between Thailand and Australia in conflict resolution ($t = 2.10, p = 0.03$), task-oriented style ($t = 2.52, p = 0.01$), strategy-oriented style ($t = -2.20, p = 0.03$), supportive style ($t = -2.32, p = 0.02$), and relationship-oriented style ($t = 3.89, p = 0.00$). Thailand is much stronger than Australia in leadership style, which focuses on finding ways for conflict resolution, task-orientation and relationship building within an organisation. The Australian public sector, on the other hand, focuses on leadership that engenders participation and equity among members, strategic thinking, and supports companionship among organisational members (Table 2).

Interestingly, the analyses do not reveal significant differences between Thai and Australian public sector organisations in leadership styles that stimulate working closely with customers (customer orientation), communication quality among members in the organisation, and creation of organisational value. Table 2 illustrated the comparative scores for leadership styles.

Statistical differences between Thailand and Australia are demonstrated for six of the nine leadership styles analysed. These clearly indicate the disparate nature of organisational cultures of the two nations, and the need for public sector management and leadership in Thailand and Australia to suit the respective local cultures. Thus, H2 is accepted.

Table 2
A comparison of leadership styles between Thailand and Australia

Leadership styles	Thailand	Australia	<i>t</i>
Participative style	3.55	3.74	-2.31*
Conflict resolution	3.43	3.26	2.10*
Task orientation	3.82	3.63	2.52*
Strategic thinking	3.59	3.74	-2.20*
Supportive style	3.60	3.76	-2.32*
Customer orientation	3.60	3.72	3.45
Relationship orientation	3.50	3.12	3.89*
Communication	3.54	3.44	1.34
Organisational value creation	3.61	3.34	2.34

Note: $p \leq 0.01$

Leadership Factors

In this part, researchers attempted to identify leadership factors from both Australian and Thai perspectives. The 32 items of the leadership style scale (part II in questionnaire) were subjected to principal component analysis (PCA). Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of 0.03 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was 0.768, exceeding the recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970). The analysis also shows that the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance (0.01), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

Principal components analysis revealed the presence of five components with Eigen values exceeding 1, explaining 44.19%, 17.40%, 4.63%, 4.03% and 3.84% of the variance respectively. An inspection of the screeplot revealed a clear break after the fourth component. Using Catell's (1966) scree test, it was decided to

retain four components for further investigation. This was supported by the results of Parallel Analysis, which also showed four components with Eigen values exceeding the corresponding criterion values for a randomly generated data matrix of the same size. The four-component solution explained a total of 66.28% of the variance. Oblimin rotation was performed to aid in the interpretation of the components. The rotated solution revealed the presence of simple structure, with four components showing a number of strong loadings and all variables loading substantially on a particular component.

The analyses from the component matrix also reveal that questions 54, 53, 57, 39, 35, 58, 55, 56, 52, 41, 49, 38, 51 and 50 are loaded on factor one. There are two groups of question loading on this factor: communication, knowledge and information management. Both groups are clearly inter-related, hence, this factor can be labelled as *communication-oriented style*.

Questions 33, 32, 34, 27, 36, 26 and 28 are loaded on factor two. All questions in this group are related to planning, idea generation, goal and task setting and process in strategy. This factor can be labelled as *strategic thinking and planning style*.

The third factor consists of questions 45, 46, 40, 42, 43 and 44. The first three questions are related to relationship with other stakeholders. Similarly, questions 42–44 focus on relationship with members in the organisation. This factor can be labelled as *relationship-building style*.

The final factor comprises question 30, 29, 31, 37. All questions in this group focus on building rapport within the organisation and finding resolutions for conflict among members in the organisation. This leadership style can be labelled as *conflict management style*.

These four components were supported by literature in this area such as Hallinger and Kantamara (2001), Colley (2001) and Wyse and Vilkinas (2004). In these literatures, communication, relationship, strategic thinking and ability to mediate situations in the organisation are mentioned as key leadership behaviours in both cultural contexts. What insufficient is the comparative aspects among organisations from various cultural backgrounds. The researchers decided to compare the four aspects of the leadership factors among officers of public sector in both countries. Hence, *t*-test analyses were conducted in order to compare the perceptions of government officers from Australia and Thailand were compared and presented in Table 3.

Table 3
A comparison of leadership styles between Thailand and Australia

Leadership styles	Australia	Thailand	<i>t</i>
Communication-oriented style	3.40	3.34	-0.23
Strategic-thinking style	3.42	3.52	1.80
Relationship-building style	3.21	3.68	-0.77*
Conflict Management Sstyle	3.33	3.58	0.59*

Note: $p \leq 0.01$

The results show a significant difference among Thai and Australian preferred leadership styles on relationship-building style ($t = -0.77, p < 0.01$) and conflict management style ($t = 0.59, p < 0.01$), with Thai public sector officers show higher mean score than Australian in both styles. The findings from this study confirm that relationship building and conflict management are two key characteristics of preferred leader in the Thai public organisations. This finding can be related to the key characteristics of the Thais, conflict avoidance and prioritize personal relationship (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001).

Australians were considered different to Thais across a number of leadership elements. Australians seem to prefer leaders who can propose strategic thinking and communicate well in the organisational environment. Previous Australian researchers examined this point from private and business organisations (i.e. Rymer, 2008; Ashkanasy, Trevor-Roberts, & Kennedy, 2003; Dowling & Nagel, 1986) and also confirmed that vision and strategic thinking are key characteristics of great leadership in the eyes of Australians.

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study investigated two aspects of Thai and Australian public sector management: organisational culture and leadership styles. Findings from this study identify differences that are meaningful for those interested in international public sector management.

Organisational culture plays an important role in the effectiveness of all organisations (Pimpa, 2010). This study confirms local cultures in Thailand and Australia play a pivotal role in national public sector management. For the Thai public sector system, harmony and conflict avoidance are important, and are perceived as critical factors for the national public sector. These findings concur with previous studies (i.e. Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001; Rojanapanich & Pimpa, 2011) which examined the culture of Thai public organisations. The managerial implication for Thai organisational culture is the desirability of leadership that

enhances harmony within the public sector system. This point is well-supported by this study's findings on leadership styles. Thai public sector organisations tend to adopt task-orientated, supportive approaches and customer-orientated leadership styles. Leader who support their followers, focus on achieving the tasks and please the customers, are perceived by Thai staff as effective leaders in the public sector system.

In the Australian context, this study confirms the public sector system is low in power for "acceptance" compared to Thailand, but higher with regard to gender equity. In terms of goal orientation, members of Australian public system tend to look at long-term strategies and do not see change as a challenge to the organisation. The managerial implication for the Australian public sector is that strategic, participative and supportive leaders are generally preferred by staff. These points are well-supported by the analyses on leadership styles of this study.

In terms of local and organisational culture of Thai and Australian organisations, this findings diverge from those of previous studies which had identified Thailand (and organisations) as short-term and passive (Hofstede, 1984; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000). This study, in comparison, found that organisations in the Thai public sector system are moving towards long-term planning and tend to focus on achieving goals and creating value in the organisation. This may be the consequence of public sector reform strategies implemented in Thailand since 2003 (Office of Civil Service Commission [OCSC], 2006) aimed at restructuring the governance system in the Thai public sector. Leadership is a key factor considered by the Thai Government in adopting reform strategies.

Supportive and task-oriented leadership styles are perceived as effective in both the Thai and Australian public sector systems. In fact, a number of studies on international management confirm that task-oriented, with strong support from leaders, seem to be the way to go in most of the world, not just Australia and Thailand.

The analyses of data also identify four major types of leadership styles that heavily influence the governmental organisations in Australia and Thailand. Leadership style that focus on communication, knowledge sharing, and dissemination of information among members in the organisation is rated highly in this study. One point that is important for followers is leadership styles that encourage communications at the multi-level dimension among internal and external members of the organisation. This point can be supported by the fact that governmental organisations are the composition of complexity. Organisational structure and hierarchy may impede the flow of communication among members. Thus, leadership style that stimulates intra-organisational communication is

perceived as an effective style. As Rymer (2008, p. 119) suggested, "possibly it is an Australianism that leaders must articulate and simplify messages for staff."

Leadership that focuses on strategic thinking and planning within the governmental organisations is significant. The results from this study confirm that followers in governmental organisations appreciate leaders who can craft strategies, identify the goal of the organisation and how to achieve them to the members, clarify strengths and weaknesses of the organisations, and identify alternative modes to achieve the objectives. Since governmental organisations in Australia and Thailand are goal-oriented in nature (see Table 1), it is important that modern public-sector leaders in both countries adopt the concept of strategic management to their organisations, to stimulate positive atmosphere among various stakeholders.

Leadership style that fosters personal and/or business relationship among stakeholders is rated highly among the participants in this study. This point is not new since a number of previous studies in organisational management confirm that good relationship among group members can influence group members on a number of positive aspects such as completion of the task effectively, level of satisfaction among members, and good health of the organisation.

The study also confirms the importance of leadership style that supports conflict management in public sector organisations in both countries. Leadership under this category is demonstrated by leaders who are open in discussion with staff members, agree to disagree and listen to different ideas from all staff members, discuss differences in values openly, and be honest to stakeholders and the community.

By comparing the results, it indicates a clear similarity between Australian and Thai public sector culture. Public sector organisations in both countries value leaders who focus on achieving task, can set common goals for the followers, and craft and implement strategies that support public services.

One important aspect is most leadership theories are from American perspectives. Leadership styles in Australia and South East Asian countries (including Thailand) are unique and should be treated as such by academics, leaders and leadership practitioners. American leadership theories should be tailored and modified to be applied effectively in the local organisational context.

Unequivocally, effective leadership is crucial in producing successful outcomes in the public sector, including for Thailand and Australia. Whether considering the influence of leadership on organisational culture, or vice versa, that constituting an "effective" leader differs considerably between the two nations. It

is evident from this study that significant distinctions between the organisational cultures of Thailand and Australia are matched by marked dissimilarities of preferred leadership styles. Through the recognition of members of public sector organisations' perceptions and expectations of leadership styles, and application thereof, those in positions of leadership at local, national and international levels are better primed for positive outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This project has been funded by RMIT University and the Australia-Thailand Institute.

REFERENCES

- Ashkanasy, N., Trevor-Roberts, E., & Kennedy, J. (2003). Leadership attributes and cultural values in Australian and New Zealand compared: An initial report based on GLOBE data. *International Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, 2(3), 37–44.
- Bolman, L., & Deal, T. (1991). Leading and managing: Effects of context, culture and gender. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 28(3), 314–329.
- Cannella, A., & Monroe, J. (1997). Contrasting perspectives on strategic leaders: Towards a more realistic view of top managers. *Journal of Management*, 23(3), 213–237.
- Chia, R. (2002). The production of management knowledge: Philosophical underpinnings of research design. In Partington, D. (eds.), *Essential Skills for Management Research* (pp. 23–45). London: Sage Publications.
- Colley, L. (2001). The changing face of public sector employment. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 60(1), 9–20.
- Denison, D. (1996). What is the difference between organisational culture and organisational climate. *Academy of Management Review*, 21(3), 619–654.
- Dorfman, P. (1996). International and cross-cultural leadership. In J. Punnett & O. Shenkar, (eds.), *Handbook for International Management Research* (pp. 54–69). Massachusetts: Blackwell Publisher.
- Dowling, P., & Nagel, T. (1986). Nationality and work attitudes: A study of Australian and American business majors. *Journal of Management*, 12(1), 121–128.
- Dubrin, A., & Dalglish, C. (2001). *Leadership an Australasian focus*. Queensland, Australia: John Wiley & Sons.
- Edwards, R., Edwards, J., & Muthaly, S. (1995). *Doing business in Thailand: Essential background knowledge and first hand advice*. Melbourne: Asian Business Research Unit, Monash University.
- Fleishman, A., Mumford, D., Zaccaro, J., Levin Y., Korotkin, A., & Hein, B. (1991). Taxonomic efforts in the description of leaders' behaviour: A synthesis and functional interpretation. *Leadership Quarterly* 2(4), 245–287.

- Glickman, C., & Sergiovanni, T. (2006). *Rethinking leadership* (2nd Ed.). California: Corwin Press.
- Hallinger, P. (2004). Meeting the challenges of cultural leadership: The changing role of principals in Thailand. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 25(1), 61–73.
- Hallinger, P., & Kantamara, P. (2001). Learning to lead global changes in local cultures - designing a computer-based simulation for Thai school leaders. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 39(3), 197–220.
- Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values* (Abridged ed.). California: Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, G., & Hofstede, G. J. (2005). *Cultures and organisations: Software of the mind, revised and expanded* (2nd Ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Hooijberg, R., & Choi, J. (2001). The impact of organisational characteristics on leadership effectiveness models: An examination of leadership in a private and a public sector organisation. *Administration & Society* 33(4), 403–431 .
- Kefala, G. (2010). Understanding organisational culture and leadership enhance efficiency and productivity. *PM World Today*. 12(1), 1-14. Retrieved from <http://www.pmforum.org/library/papers/2010/PDFs/jan/FP-KEFELE-Managingorganisationa cultures.pdf>
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Nunnally, J. (1978). *Psychometric theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Office of Civil Service Commission [OCSC]. (2006). *Strategic plan for public sector reform*. Bangkok: Thammasat University Press.
- Ogbonna, E., & Harris, L. (2002). Leadership style, organisational culture and performance: Empirical evidence from UK companies. *The International of Human Resource Management*, 11(4), 766–788.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2001). *Public sector leadership for the 21st century: Executive summary OECD report*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/0/34/2434104.pdf>
- Pimpa, N. (2010). *Global marketing for Australian education: Lessons and strategies*. Berlin: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Pimpa, N. (2009). Learning problems in transnational business education and training: The case of the MBA in Thailand. *International Journal of Training and Development* 13(4), 262–279.
- Politis, D. (2001). The relationship of various leadership types to knowledge management. *Leadership and Organisation Development Journal*, 22(8), 354–364.
- Pors, N. (2008). Management tools, organisational culture and leadership: An explorative study. *Performance Measurement and Metrics*, 9(2), 138–152.
- Reynaldo, J., & Santos, A. (1999). Cronbach's alpha: A tool for assessing the reliability of scales. *Journal of Extension*, 37(2), 23–25. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/1999april/tt3.php>
- Roberts, E. Ashkanasy, N., & Kennedy, J. (2003). The egalitarian leader: A comparison of leadership in Australia and New Zealand. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 20, 517–540.

- Rojanapanich, P., & Pimpa, N. (2011). Creative education, globalization and social imaginary. *Creative Education*, 2(4), 327–332.
- Rymer, C. (2008). Leadership in Australia - how different are we? DBA thesis, Lismore: Southern Cross University. Retrieved from <http://epubs.scu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1117&context=theses>
- Sarros, J. (1992). What leaders say they do: An Australian example. *Leadership and Organisation Development Journal*, 13(5), 21–27.
- Schein, E. (1992). *Organisational culture and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sergiovanni, T. (1984). Leadership and excellence in schooling. *Educational Leadership*. February, 4–13.
- Sergiovanni, T. (1999). *Rethinking leadership*. Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight Professional Development.
- Sergiovanni, T. (2001). *Leadership: What's in it for schools?* London: Routledge-Falmer.
- Shahin, A., & Wright, P. (2004). Leadership in the context of culture: An Egyptian perspective. *Leadership and Organisation Development Journal*, 25(6), 499–511.
- Shergold, P. (2005). Regeneration: New structures, new leaders, new traditions. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 64(2), 3–6.
- Trafimow, D., Triandis, H., & Goto, S. (1991). Some tests of the distinction between the private self and the collective self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60(2), 649–655.
- Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (1997). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding diversity in global business*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Trompenaars, F., & Wooliams, P. (2003). *Business across cultures*. West Sussex: Capstone Publishing Ltd.
- Wart, M. (2003). Public sector leadership theory: An assessment. *Public Administration Review*, 63(2), 214–228.
- Wiersema, F., & Bantel, A. (1992). Top management team demography and corporate strategic change. *Academy of Management Review*, 35(3), 91–121.
- Wright, B., & Pandey, S. (2010). Transformational leadership in the public sector: does structure matter? *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 20(1), 75–89.
- Wyse, A., & Vilkinas, T. (2004). Executive leadership roles in the Australian public service. *Women in Management Review*, 19(4), 205–211.
- Yoon, S., Donahue, W., & Woodley, K. (2010). Leadership competency inventory: a systematic process of developing and validating a leadership competency scale. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 4(3), 39–50.
- Yukl, G. (1994). *Leadership in organisations* (3rd Ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.