

The Factors of Thai Workers' Behavioral Characteristics during Kaizen Activities

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ABSTRACT

Each country's culture is unique and comes from a combination of different factors that influence local worker behavior, affecting decision making and the reactions of the individual in work situations. This research investigated the combinations and degrees of those factors affecting Kaizen as part of the process to structure a proper method for enhancing the performance of Kaizen activities in Thailand. The research utilized tools in order to explore the root causes of problems within the culture and then to arrange the findings systematically. The results showed that Thai worker's behavior is formed from the characteristics of High Power Distance, High Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism, Femininity, and Short Term Orientation. By focusing on these unique characteristics, factory owners or managers in Thailand could adjust their Kaizen plans properly.

Key words: behavior of Thai workers, Thai cultures, Thai norms

บทคัดย่อ

วัฒนธรรมของแต่ละประเทศเป็นสิ่งที่มีเอกลักษณ์และเกิดมาจากการรวมกันของปัจจัยที่แตกต่างกันต่างๆ โดยปัจจัยเหล่านี้นั้นจะบ่งบอกถึง พฤติกรรมของกลุ่มพนักงานที่จะกระทบต่อ กระบวนการตัดสินใจและปฏิกริยาตอบโต้ต่อกลุ่ม พนักงานระหว่างปฏิบัติงาน งานวิจัยนี้เพื่อวิเคราะห์ หาปัจจัยและระดับความสำคัญของปัจจัยนั้นๆ ที่ส่งผลต่อ กิจกรรม ไกเซ็น ซึ่งเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของ กระบวนการที่จะสร้างวิธีการที่เหมาะสมในการเพิ่ม ขีดความสามารถของกระบวนการ ไกเซ็น ในประเทศไทย งานวิจัยฉบับนี้ใช้ครื่องมือเชิงคุณภาพเพื่อที่จะ

ค้นหาแหล่งที่มาของปัญหาที่สืบเนื่องมาจากปัจจัย ทางวัฒนธรรมและดำเนินการจัดข้อมูลอย่างเป็นระบบ ผลการวิจัยพบว่าลักษณะพฤติกรรมของคนงานไทยที่ มีต่อกระบวนการ ไกเซ็น เกิดจากการมุ่งเน้นการรวม อำนาจจากผู้บังคับบัญชา ความต้องการในการรับมือ กับความไม่แน่นอนของพนักงาน ความต้องการ ทำงานเป็นกลุ่มของพนักงาน การให้ความสำคัญของ ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคลของพนักงาน และการ ให้ความสำคัญกับผลลัพธ์ในระยะสั้นของพนักงาน จากการเรียนรู้ถึงลักษณะดังกล่าว ข้างต้นผู้ประกอบ การและผู้บริหารองค์กรสามารถนำลักษณะดังกล่าว มาเป็นข้อมูลในการปรับปรุงแผนพัฒนา ไกเซ็น ได้ใน โอกาสต่อไป

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, all industries worldwide are focusing on the development of their competitive advantage. They are imitating both successful stories and practical logical concepts from the top-achieving industries and companies around the world. One of the concepts that has received considerable interest and on which much time and effort have been spent to try to duplicate is the Kaizen concept, which basically means “Continuous Improvement”. Kaizen has been famous among Japanese corporations, and later among enterprises all over the world, for helping Japan escape many times since World War II from its economic difficulties (Imai, 1986: 3; Lillrank and Kano, 1989: 6; Shimokawa, 1994: 27). Kaizen has helped corporate Japan to enhance its operational productivity. During the late 1970s, Kaizen was introduced to overseas operations following Japanese corporate expansion (Shimokawa, 1994: 72; Poapongsakorn, 2004). However, for almost three decades now, Thailand has continued to have only limited Kaizen capability in terms of production processes and technological development (Poapongsakorn, 2004). Research into the lack of uptake of Kaizen thus became necessary. Prativedwannakij (2008) found that the problems in developing Kaizen activities in Thailand came from both management and their staff. In this research, the focus was only on the problems arising from workers’ behavior, which were seen to be unique.

Understanding the real causes of worker behavior would help both industrialists and government policy makers to design the proper tools and policies to enhance Kaizen activities. Hofstede (2001) conducted research to identify the characteristics of each country in the world. Thai cultures were indicated as being constructed from characteristics of High Power Distance, Low Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism, Femininity, and Long Term Orientation. However, those characteristics were analyzed based on general IBM data sources, not on specific worker data from the industries. In order to create proper

implementation plans for Kaizen development, it was considered necessary that the validity of the characteristics mentioned by Hofstede (2001) needed to be tested in the first instance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kaizen means “ongoing improvement involving everyone, including both managers and workers” (Imai, 1986: 3). Kaizen actually is constructed from six basic concepts, which are: the duties of maintenance-improvement, process and result orientation, the PDCA circle, quality priority, the scientific problem-solving method, and an awareness of the next process (Imai, 1997: 2).

According to the Thailand Automotive Institute, the PDCA cycle is the foundation of Kaizen development. However, the concept of a PDCA cycle alone is not enough; Japanese Kaizen needs the other five concepts mentioned to enhance and expand the original PDCA capability. Lillrank and Kano (1989) explained the processes of the PDCA cycle, “The PDCA cycle starts with planning activity, that is, the definition of a problem and a hypothesis about possible causes and solutions. The Hypothesis is tested in the Do phase. The results of the test are observed and evaluated in the Check phase. If the results are unsatisfactory, the process goes back to Plan or Do to find the cause of unsatisfactory results. When a workable solution is found, it is standardized and implemented in the Action phase, which ends in a review of the whole procedure and suggestions about how to continue.”

Some researchers considered that Kaizen could not perform effectively outside Japan (Poapongsakorn, 2004). In Thailand, Prativedwannakij (2008) identified the problems of Kaizen development in his research. The root causes of inefficient Kaizen came from both the company management and company workers. The problems due to management came simply from poor company systems and management’s mindset, which did not recognize the benefits of implementing Kaizen. Other Kaizen

problems occurred from the behavior of workers. From the research of Prativedwannakij (2008) in Bangkok, the characteristics of "Afraid to talk", "Compromise", "Lack of Real Action", and "No Life Objective" were identified.

In order to find out the factors influencing the behavioral characteristics identified, the current research applied the ideas on behavior identification following the method of Hofstede (2001). This approach incorporated the concepts of a level of Power Distance, a size of Uncertainty Avoidance, a degree of Individualism, a level of Masculinity, and the focus of a Long-term objective. An explanation of these concepts was presented by Hofstede (2001: xix).

Power of Distance (PD) is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The basic problem involved is the degree of human inequality that underlies the functioning of each particular society.

Uncertainty Avoidance (UA) is the extent to which a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, different from usual. The basic problem involved is the degree to which a society tries to control the uncontrollable.

Individualism-Collectivism (IN-CO) is the degree to which individuals are supposed to look after themselves or remain integrated into groups, usually

around the family. Positioning between these poles is a very basic problem people from all societies face.

Masculinity-Femininity (MA-FE) is the distribution of emotional roles between the genders, which is another fundamental problem for any society for which a range of solutions are found; the range extends from "tough" masculine to "tender" feminine societies.

Long Term orientation-Short Term orientation (LT-ST) is the extent to which a culture programs its members to accept delayed gratification of their material, social, and emotional needs.

According to Hofstede (2001), Hofstede and IBM distributed questionnaires to compare the degrees of the above-mentioned variables in more than 66 countries around the world. Based on the Hofstede research and calculations by Prativedwannakij (2008) Table 1 compares the arithmetic means of the all-countries sample with the scores for Thailand's data, and shows that Thai cultures fell in between the mean ranges (+/- 1 standard deviation) for all of Hofstede's key factors. This might mean that the degrees of Power Distance (PD), Uncertainty Avoidance (UA), Individualism-Collectivism (IN-CO), Masculinity-Femininity (MA-FE), and Time Orientation (LT-ST) were medium when compared to the cultures of other countries. Nevertheless, the use of arithmetic means along with the statistical outcomes, should enable the research to develop a better understanding of Thai culture and behavior in the context of local workers.

Table 1 Thai culture analysis

Statistics	PD Index	UA Index	IN-CO Index	MA-FE Index	LT-ST Index
Sd of Index	22	24	24	19	25
Mean of Index	60	67	43	50	43
Sd+ Mean	81	90	67	69	68
Sd- Mean	38	43	19	31	19
Comparison of Thailand data (with the global average behavior data)					
Thailand	64	64	20	34	56
Result Zone	In mean range				
	Upper zone	Lower zone	Lower zone	Lower zone	Upper zone

MODEL DEVELOPMENT

The Thai cultural characteristics investigated in this research were tested following the concepts of Hofstede (2001). Since the Hofstede (2001) research did not focus directly on the workers' behavior, the current research explored the behavior in this grey area. Based on the application of a qualitative approach (interviews), the current research had some limitations in the analysis with regard to judging the degree of the tested variables. Based on the arithmetic means and statistical outcomes, the key hypotheses presented were:

1. Thai culture should be characterized as a relatively High Power Distance culture. In order to test this argument, the research would examine the degree of Power Distance between the managers and their workers. If the hypothesis were true, Thai workers would accept the hierarchical orders and expect the inequality of power distributions.

2. Thai culture should be characterized by relatively Low Uncertainty Avoidance. To test this argument, the research would examine the degree of risk that the workers were prepared to take by themselves. If the hypothesis were true, the workers would not be afraid of new processes and new ideas.

3. Thai culture should be characterized as relatively Collectivism. In order to test and confirm this statement, the research would examine the degree of the workers' relationship and their responses. If the hypothesis were true, Thai employees in the samples would act and respond according to the group's responses. The employees would also look after each other.

4. The culture of Thai staff should be characterized as relatively Feminine. To prove this argument, the research would investigate the degree of the workers' relationships and their awareness toward the work concept. If the hypothesis were true, the workers would prefer solving problems with a concern for the relationships among the people. As Thai society was indicated as being characterized as having Femininity (Hofstede, 2001: 318), the workers, in addition, would feel that they were working in

order to live, not living in order to work.

5. Thai culture should be characterized as relatively Long Term Orientation. In order to test and confirm this hypothesis, the research would find out the degree of delay in responding to the workers' needs. If the hypothesis were true, the workers would place greater weight on considering their future needs rather than short-term needs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research utilized qualitative research tools and analysis to address the research objectives. The interview approach used exploratory and explanatory questions. The interviews were conducted formally, semi-formally, or informally depending on the interviewing situation. However, it was the researcher's aim to arrange as many formal and semi-formal interviews as possible. The Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle was used as the framework to explore and test the hypotheses, which is part of the Kaizen concept. The interviewer posed questions on the problems of Kaizen implementation in each step of the PDCA cycle and linked the answers to test the hypotheses. All the questions were asked in the Thai language. The questions were open-ended to allow the interviewees to express their ideas freely.

SAMPLES

Interview samples were chosen for convenience. The study was granted permission by the country's leading underpinning company and the largest electricity-providing State Enterprise to observe their operations. For the Bangkok trip research in February 2008, the author received substantial contributions from the Thailand Automotive Institute to collect data from interviewees they suggested. During the Tokyo Gift Show Exhibition in September 2008, the author received the considerable support from the Royal Thai Embassy (Japan) to carry out interviews with key people in Thai exporting companies.

The samples were first evaluated to ensure they were capable of providing suitable data to answer the questions, before starting the main interview process, in order to avoid validity and reliability problems. The samples could be categorized into three groups.

Firstly, interviews and observations were conducted in a leading underpinning company based in Bangkok. This company has more than 30 years of experience in providing underpinning solutions for damaged underground structures. The company's organization could be clearly separated into three units: the administration unit, the engineering and design unit, and the construction and operations unit. The researcher observed and interviewed one Chief Executive Officer, one project manager, three supervisors, and three blue collar workers. However, the main focus was on activities in the construction and operations unit (the operational level). Based on the company's information, the operating workers had been trained in the PDCA concept for approximately three years.

Secondly, the research explored the cultural characteristics of Kaizen activities in the largest electricity-providing State Enterprise, which is one of the biggest state enterprises in Thailand, having been in service since the mid 1880s. In addition to interviewing one executive, five engineers and two technicians, group interviews and observations were conducted within the quality-assurance department. Some of the observations were undertaken in the State Enterprise's supplier company. Based on information provided, the operating workers had been trained in the PDCA concept for approximately three years.

Finally, the research also used 15 interviews, which were conducted during research trips to Bangkok in February 2008 and during the Tokyo Gift Show Exhibition in September 2008. The interviews undertaken during February 2008 consisted of two management staff and five consultants and chiefly focused on the automobile industry. The interviews conducted during the Tokyo Gift Show Exhibition involved eight management staff from Thai exporting

companies, which had their own production lines. The companies of interviewees at the Tokyo Gift Show Exhibition had been operating for at least 10 years and received support from the Royal Thai government to promote their products and sales activities. The workers of the companies involved in the sample taken in February 2008 had been trained in the PDCA concept for at least five years, while the ones from the Tokyo Gift Show sample had been instructed in the PDCA concept for at least eighteen months.

Even though all people who participated in the observations and interviews were classified as technical and skilled workers with at least nine years of education, those from the State Enterprise and the Underpinning Company were sophisticated technicians with a higher education standard than the others. The State Enterprise was the largest corporation in the study, followed by the underpinning company and the automobile part companies. The comparatively smaller companies were those sampled from the Tokyo Gift Shows. In this study, the respondents drawn from the workers from the State Enterprise were seen to have a higher sense of belonging to the organization compared with the others. They recognized themselves as officers of the State Enterprise, which was larger than a normal private company.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the PDCA cycle, the data obtained from the interviews and observations were categorized into evidence. In response to the research hypotheses, the PDCA evidence was then presented in relation to the cultural characteristics of Power Distance (PD), Uncertainty Avoidance (UA), Individualism-Collectivism (IN-CO), Masculinity- Femininity (MA-FE), Long Term orientation-Short Term orientation (LT- ST).

Power Distance

The observations and interviews found evidence, which could clearly explain the Power

Distance of Thai workers in the Plan step and the Do step.

Evidence from the Plan step

Based on information from the observations and interviews, the workers were seen to be passive and obedient toward the orders of their superiors. In addition, they tended to believe in orders and felt familiar with a bureaucratic system. The technicians interviewed from the State Enterprise mentioned, "We (the technicians) only received the orders and instructions from our supervisors. We believed that our bosses also received those orders and instructions from the higher rank officers." (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008a: 13). From the State Enterprise's group interview, the technicians also mentioned that their bosses never explained how they developed the working plans. This statement was also confirmed by the information from the underpinning company's observations. Some of the workers in the company expressed, "We always believe in our bosses and are waiting for instructions." (Prativedwannakij, 2008b: 11). According to the Bangkok observations of the underpinning company, when the senior engineer asked the operational workers to participate in their site planning process, there was only silence in the meeting room. No one said anything. The author conducted another deeper interview with one of workers from that planning process. That worker mentioned that, "I have nothing to say and I have just joint this meeting because my supervisors had asked me to be here." (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008b: 11). Based on the exporting companies' opinions from the Tokyo Gift Show, some of the company representatives mentioned that, "The workers have no motivation to participate in the Plan activities and most likely to wait for only the bosses' orders." (Prativedwannakij, Sep 2008: 1)

Evidence from the Do step

According to the observations from the State Enterprise, Power Distance in the organization was noticed to be high. The engineers and technicians paid significant attentions to their bosses' instructions.

One of the technicians mentioned that, "I had better follow the boss' instruction strictly and do not want to ask any questions toward the boss." (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008a: 13). The same situation occurred in the observations of the underpinning company. One of the supervisors interviewed mentioned that, "We have to obey our bosses' orders. We are the workers, so we should listen to bosses' orders. Our responsibility is doing the jobs as ordered." (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008b: 9). The other interviewees from the Tokyo Gift Show in September 2008 also insisted that, "The workers are not only afraid of their boss but sometimes also of failing the boss' orders." (Prativedwannakij, Sep 2008: 1).

Based on the information obtained from the Plan step and the Do step, there is evidence to confirm the validity of the hypothesis that, "Thai culture should be High Power Distance". This research found that local workers accepted inequality between themselves and their bosses. They believed that they needed to follow their boss' orders strictly.

Uncertainty avoidance

Based on the results, worker behavior was influenced by High Uncertainty Avoidance as evidenced from the Do step and the Act step information.

Evidence from the Do step

The workers felt routine jobs were an acceptable part of their working life and considered that the job processes should not be changed. Some technicians from the State Enterprise had the opinion that, "We like the works that we are doing now. Even we have to repeat them everyday. Sometimes we enjoy them very much because we could comfortably plan other things after we finish our daily jobs." (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008a: 13). Other workers from the underpinning company also had the same response to routine matters. They stated that, "We feel somehow comfortable with existing routine processes and feel a little bit of inconvenience to change processes." (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008b:

15). One of independent researchers from the Bangkok research trip during February 2008 mentioned that, “The workers do not like the risk and would like to continue their lives with the routine jobs, which could lead to the workers’ mindset by reducing the senses of learning” (Prativedwannakij, Feb 2008: 5).

Evidence from the Act step

Sometimes both management and supervisors did not want to change the existing processes due to concerns of unexpected future risks. According to the State Enterprise group interview, some engineers mentioned that, “Our bosses seem to avoid the consequences of changing the processes. They kept asking the effects of the process adjustment all the time and finally they changed nothing. Somehow they do not want to risk their careers with these small things.” (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008a: 12). The CEO of the sample underpinning company also mentioned that, “Changing the process might affect directly the company profits. Although I want to make the company process run better, but I cannot risk my cash-flow with those plans’ assumptions. In cases that I have enough manpower and cash-flow, I would be OK to do it.” (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008b: 2). An interviewee from the Tokyo Gift Show insisted that, “Basically Thai entrepreneurs and their workers are afraid of unexpected results; therefore it would be hard for them to accept and start changing something or some processes in their companies.” (Prativedwannakij, Sep 2008: 14).

Based on the information obtained from the Do step and the Act step, there was evidence to reject the hypothesis that, “Thai culture is relatively Low Uncertainty Avoidance”. This research found local workers were afraid of changes and would prefer to live with what they already had.

Individualism-Collectivism

According to the research observations and interviews, the results of Individualism- Collectivism could be explored by the evidence from the Plan step.

Evidence from the Plan step

In the meeting process, according to the underpinning company observations at the Bangkok sites, the workers felt very uncomfortable and started hating being at the meeting when their bosses began to call out their names publicly to ask for some opinions. Based on the non-verbal interpretations, it was seen that calling out an individual’s name could force the worker to feel insecure from the rest of their group. The meetings in the State Enterprise were performed in the same way and they forced the employees to feel very uncomfortable at being singled out in front of their group. One of the engineers mentioned that, “When I called my technicians and try to ask someone in the group, I could sense that the called technician felt uncomfortable to stand in front of me and others.” (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008a: 5). Moreover, based on the interviews from Bangkok in February 2008, the automobile-parts manufacturing managers agreed they had the same circumstance and insisted that, “Thai workers dislike separating from their groups and try to stick together.” (Prativedwannakij, Feb 2008: 3).

Based on this information, there is evidence to confirm the hypothesis that, “Thai culture is relatively Collectivism”. Thai workers were found to prefer being in and referred to as a team, to being identified as an individual.

Masculinity/ Femininity

Based on the results, there was evidence to verify the validity of the hypothesis related to Masculinity/Femininity in the Plan step and the Check step.

Evidence from the Plan step

Based on the observations during this research in Bangkok, the interviewees mentioned the proverb, “Pood Pai Song pai beay Ning Sia Tam lung Tong”, which means Speech is silver, silence is golden.” This proverb also implies that sometimes ignorance could benefit you (The Royal Institute of Thailand, 1999). Many engineers from the State Enterprise

experienced planning situations and remembered that, “Sometimes talking nothing might be the best. We could not gain anything but at least we loss nothing (Especially relationship among the colleagues). We want to experience proverb- Pood Pai Song pai beay Ning Sia Tam lung Tong” (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008a: 5). Other supervisors at the underpinning sites also agreed on this point, “If we contribute the good ideas, we might get some admires, however if they become bad ones, we would possibly feel regret what we already did. So saying nothing in the meeting might be the best way.” (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008b: 7). The interviewees from the Tokyo Gift Show sample also supported this point and mentioned that, “This culture is innate in Thai people’s mind. Even, in the management level, proverb- Pood Pai Song pai beay, Ning Sia Tam lung Tong also affects the quality of the management meeting and makes the planning process move very slowly and inefficiently. Sometimes the workers and middle managers are concerned too much with the impacts on relationship rather than with the benefits that they could possible receive from their improved works.” (Prativedwannakij, Sep 2008: 9).

Evidence from the Check step

Another factor that could make Kaizen implementation unsuccessful is the “Mai Pen Rai” culture. Mai Pen Rai means “It does not matter”, or “Never mind”, or “It is no big deal”. Based on the observations conducted in the underpinning sites in Bangkok, this research found that the company’s workers noticed a number of problems during their work, but because of the Mai Pen Rai culture with its implication of compromise and avoidance of problems among co-workers, the workers, having found a problem, would simply ignore it and let the cause of the problem remain in the process. The same was found with technicians from the State Enterprise. An interviewee from the Tokyo Gift Show also agreed and mentioned that, “In my toy factory, some supervisors often use the word- Mai Pen Rai in the workplace to avoid the future problems and some relationship conflicts. It creates the wrong behavioral

concept for the workers by overlooking the mistakes and ignoring them.” (Prativedwannakij, Sep 2008: 10). Another respondent during the Bangkok February interviews also mentioned that his automobile-parts company experienced the same Mai Pen Rai problems. This interviewee mentioned that, “We are facing Thai culture problems. Thai people are nice and relax, but sometimes they are too relax to discuss the problems among themselves. They forget and ignore the facts of the problems, which happened in the real productions. That why we are too slow to develop our process and have to face the sudden problems all the time.” (Prativedwannakij, Feb 2008: 4).

Based on the information obtained from the Plan step and the Check step, there is evidence that supports the hypothesis that “Thai culture is relatively Feminine”. The workers gave more weight and a higher priority to relationships among themselves than to the importance of their work.

Short term orientation-Long term orientation

According to the findings, the hypothesis regarding the period of orientation of local workers could be tested by observations on the Plan and Do steps.

Evidence from the Plan step

According to interviews at the State Enterprise, one of the interviewees commented that, “I feel uncomfortable to do the planning jobs even I knew my boss wants me to give him some ideas. But since my job is only operational officer, it is quite difficult for me to cross the line and do what I should do beyond my job descriptions.” (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008a: 15). The information from the underpinning company sites was similar, where the workers were perceived to do only what was required by their job. They would not try to think of the future. One of the interviewed workers mentioned that, “I am only interested in today tasks. For now, I do not care about what would happen in the future. Today is today and tomorrow should be tomorrow.” (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008b: 11). Such short-term-focused ideas were

confirmed by the interviews with the companies' executives from the Tokyo Gift Show during September 2008. Respondents from all of the companies interviewed agreed that local workers tended to focus on their short-term work and were not concerned about future planning.

Evidence from the Do step

The problems of the Do step could stem from a lack of real actions to complete the task. Some Thai workers sometimes tried to think of and create good plans but they seldom tried to actualize them. Some interviewees from the State Enterprise mentioned that, "You could find many good speakers in all the organizations in Thailand; however you could hardly find the ones who really implement the plans and complete them." (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008a: 9). Based on the State Enterprise observations, the workers sometimes undertook the planning process because they were worried about their short-term responsibility. They did not complete their plans because they thought that there was plenty of time to do that. The supervisors and engineers from the underpinning company also agreed on this point and added, "Our local workers are not good doers. In some situations you might feel that they are very good thinkers. However if you look into the details, you could notice that no one is actually going to do and complete his plans. They do not think of the future. That is why they do not actually bring their plans to implementation." (Prativedwannakij, Oct 2008b: 7). Other interviewees from the Tokyo Gift Exhibition also stated that, "Nowadays Thai teenagers are facing the problems of Do step. They cannot do or finish anything that they promise to do. Right now we have the special word called Pak- Dee for that behavior. Pak- Dee means being good at talking only." (Prativedwannakij, Sep 2008: 3). Based on the non-verbal interpretations, the teenager workers tried to implement plans in order to avoid complaints from their bosses and competition with other colleagues. They did not intend to commit to and complete the plans.

Based on the information obtained from the Plan step and the Do step, the results provide evidence to reject the hypothesis that "Thai culture should be relatively Long Term Orientation". Thai workers would rather focus on the short-term benefits than on long-term ones.

The effects of the differences in the sample characteristics

The differences mentioned in the sample section might have affected some fundamental ideas of the operational workers. However since this research was conducted within the company's working process, which is a new area for sampling operations, the effects of sample differences should have had little influence on the final results of the testing of the hypotheses.

CONCLUSION

The study of the characteristics of Thai worker's culture can help company management to understand the basic behavior of their workers and thus be able to construct proper guidelines to implement the "continuous improvement concept" effectively. This research found that Thai workers accepted inequality between themselves and their bosses and tended to avoid changes during process development. They were seen to prefer being referred to as a team, rather than as individuals, while in many situations the workers tended to avoid personal problems and did not want to have face-to-face confrontations with their colleagues. More to the point, they focused on the short-term benefits rather than on the long-term ones.

Thus, Thai culture could be formed by High Power Distance, High Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism, Femininity, and Short Term Orientation. These findings do not conflict with the results of Hofstede (2001), but help to improve the research by explaining more about the grey areas of Thai worker behavior, on which Hofstede (2001) did not focus. These results could be very important priority

findings for the next improvements in designing better policies and incentives, in order to persuade the workers to enhance their work efforts in manufacturing processes.

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