The concept of leadership in us and japan

Introduction

United States and Japan are two giant economic powers in the pacific region. Each country has developed their own management and leadership practice that is suitable for their culture. Gupta, Hanges & Dorfman (2002) found that United States is clustered in the same group as Australia, New Zealand and England in the Anglo Culture while Japan is in the same group as Korea, China and Taiwan in the Confucian Asia. The argument is that the nations in the same cluster have more closely related culture than the other cluster.

Despite the cultural differences there is one significant aspect where United States and Japan are similar; both countries embrace the capitalism ideology. However Ralson, Holt, Terpstra & Cheng (2008) suggest that the Japanese interpretation of capitalist idea is not identical to their US counterpart. That is one reason why Japan can still preserve their culture regardless the westernization enforced by globalization.

Leadership is one of the areas where the Japanese is still different compared to United States. Due to long economic and political relation between Japan and United States, it can be argued that there are some exchanges of values and belief. Which raise the question whether the leadership across the different culture is different in its entirety or have similarities?

This essay is aimed to compare and contrast the western approach to leadership represented by United States and the eastern approach to leadership represented by Japan by using Hofstede's five dimension of culture as the factor of comparison. The essay will first explain the culture and its dimensions and then followed by the detailed description of each

dimension by comparing both United States and Japan in each section. After that the suggested leadership style based on path-goal theory and rewarding system will be provided for each country on the framework of five culture dimension. Also the issue where leadership transcends the cultural boundaries which is possessed by transformational leaders will be discussed and to be concluded in the end. However it is important to note that the culture dimension of Hofstede is only a general perspective of a country's culture.

Cultural dimension

Luthans and Doh (2009) define culture as a system that is integrated into the society where the accumulated experience of behavior and characteristics of the members is the foundation. Therefore the culture affects legal system, education, economic system, management practice and leadership style and perception. Some culture requires a leader to be democratic, where in other culture an autocratic leadership style is more appropriate (Hartog, House, Hanges & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1999). That is why it is important to understand the similarities and differences across culture, especially the Japanese and United States to compare and contrast both nation approaches to leadership.

To compare the leadership of United States and Japanese culture the model that will be used is Hofstede's (1980, 2001) cultural dimension which consist of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism – collectivism, masculinity – femininity, and future orientation. Even though there has been much criticism for the generalization of a nation's culture and its inability to represent the cultural differences within each country (Siyakumar & Nakata, 2001), this model still can be used to compare the differences of leadership

in United States and Japanese culture because the behavior and characteristics of leaders in one country is relatively the same compared to the other regardless.

Power distance

The concept of leadership is closely related to the power distance between the leaders and their followers. This is because the role of a leader is related to power, influence and status in the society or in organization (Lord & Maher, 1991 as cited in Hartog et al., 1999). Power distance itself is the degree of acceptance from the society of the power and authority distribution in organizations and institutions, defined by Hofstede (1980, 2001).

Power distance and decision making process and authority are related together in inversely manner (Schuler & Rogoysky, 1998). United States is regarded as a country with low power distance in the culture dimension. Therefore the decision making and responsibility is more likely to be more directed from the leaders. On the counterpart the Japanese decision making process is unique where the process has to go through peer consultation before it is approved. This is also related to the responsibility of leaders in each country. Glinow, Huo and Lowe (1999) assert that pursuing goals and degree of responsibility varies depends on the degree of leaders authoritarianism.

Individualist – Collectivist

This dimension is defined as a degree of framework where society is closely related to their group or not (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). In individualist countries where people are more concerned about their own interest and needs,

leaders tend to take credit of their success. Compared to the countries where collectivism is more valued the credit of success goes to the group. This is similar to the argument of Yan and Hunt's (2005) argument where:

" Individualistic cultures, such as the U. S., where leaders often take credit for their organization's success, inference-based perceptions dominate. However, in collective cultures, such as Japan, where self-effacement is valued, leaders often keep a low profile when their organizations succeed, and recognition-based perceptions dominate".

Lack of insensitivity towards the culture which ignores the expected behavior, value and assumptions can put leaders at stake, especially leaders that expatriate to another country where the cultural dimension is different. This dimension is well affected by the socioeconomic development of a country and also its democratization which increase the independent thought and action, concern of others, acceptance to change, self indulgence and pleasure and decrease the conformity, tradition and security (Schwarz & Sagie, 2000).

Masculinity – Femininity
The values that is dominant in masculine societies are the materialistic objectives, not caring for others and assertiveness while feminine society have different values such as quality of life, social relationship and caring for others (Hofstede, 2001). Again the U. S and Japan is in the opposite side of this dimension. Leadership in U. S does not tolerate poor performance in the organization while its counterpart the Japanese allow poor performance if the subordinate is to learn from the mistakes.

This dimension is also linked explicitly with the gender differences. In the research conducted by Wu & Minor (1997) comparing female managers in United States Japan and Taiwan they found out those female managers in United States tend to be more practical and aggressive compared to their counterpart in Japan and Taiwan. Even though there are significant differences in leadership of female managers in United States and Japan, it seems that in both countries leadership role is dominated by male compared to female, despite both nation acceptance of equality in gender.

Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is defined as the degree to which certain culture willing to take or reject the risk associated with the decision (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). In relation to leadership this dimension does not explain directly how a leader in certain culture, rather it explain on one of the aspect of leaders criteria based on their loyalty to the organization. Glinow et al. (1999) suggest that in a country where the uncertainty avoidance is high loyalty is significant factor and leaders is perceived as giving a behavioral model for their subordinate, however in the countries where uncertainty avoidance is low this is not a factor.

For instance Japanese workers which is categorized in culture with high uncertainty avoidance values their job highly and most likely to be the important part of their personal life, especially if they work in large corporation (Ouchi & Jaeger, 1978). This phenomenon will not be found in United States where the uncertainty avoidance is low. The system in most western countries is based on a person achievement. One can be a leader as

long as they have sufficient ability and capability to regardless the period of working in the company.

Future orientation

The final culture dimension added by Hofstede (2001) and it is simply state that certain country's cultural orientation is on the long term while other is short term. Japan is one of the countries that are categorized in the long term. As pointed out by Alston (1989) that the Japanese leaders evaluate the activities in term on the long term development of organization. This is in congruence with their high loyalty to organization. On the other hand the United States is mostly oriented to the short term because of their achievement based value.

United States Leadership

United States has been the subject in this essay as the country that highly represents the low context culture. The culture has the characteristics of low power distance, high individualistic, masculine, low uncertainty avoidance and short term oriented in the cultural dimension. Therefore it is more suitable for United States leaders to use participative, supportive leadership and implement the reward and punishment (Dorfman, Hibino, Lee, Tate & Bautista, 1997).

Participative leadership can be used because the fact that United States is a country with high individualistic and also strongly hold to democratic system. However it is not the case for directive leadership because most workers in United States are highly educated with skills and experience (Kerr & Jermier, 1978). Supportive leadership is also acceptable due to moderate to strong relationship of leaders and followers (Indvik, 1986 cited in Dorfman, et al.,

1997). Due to the materialistic nature of United States culture the reward and punishment system is effective. According McClelland & Boyatzis (1982) high individualism and high achievement is also factors leveraging the effectiveness of reward and punishment in United States. Thus leaders in this country should use these different leadership styles depending on the demand of situations to effectively lead the people in the organization.

Japanese Leadership

Japanese is regarded as a country with high power distance, moderately collectivist, more feminine, low uncertainty avoidance and long term orientated. Arguably, external pressure arising from the expansion of globalization will eventually force Japanese to converge towards the western values and norms that are deemed to be global and standardized (Frenkel, 1994 as cited in Dalton & Benson, 2002). Ornatowski (1998) also concurred to the notion of forces of globalization of creating one world market will lead to standardization of management practice across the globe including ending Japanese-style Leadership. However, Dalton & Benson (2002) observed although Japanese firms are undergoing transformational phase of " westernize" management practices, the effort fall short as constraints exist by strong employment security enforced and supported by legal framework, traditional management values, government policy and advocating position from enterprise union prevail.

Therefore Japanese leaders, directive, supportive, rewarding system is more appropriate (Dorfman, et al., 1997). Directive and supportive leadership style is acceptable because of the Japanese has their own mentor relationship system " sempai-kohai" which can not be found in United States. This

relationship system can increase the personal bond between leaders and followers (Chen, 1995 as cited in Dorfman, et al., 1997). The participative leadership style is not acceptable because the power distance of leaders and followers in Japan is relatively high. And because of the cultural value and the loyalty to the company, rewarding can have more influence rather than punishing system.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders have several attributes that are universally seen as contributing to outstanding leadership (Hartog et al., 1999). Luthans & Doh (2009) suggest that those attributes can be characterized into four interrelated factors: idealized influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual stimulation and Individualized consideration.

Transformational leaders are the source of charisma and they increase the confidence, loyalty or followers by providing vision that the later accept. The effectiveness of leader's charisma is follower dependent especially if there was a significant change or crisis preceding (Northouse, 2001 as cited in Reave, 2005). Moreover Yukl (1998) as cited in Hartog et al. (1999) stressed that there is a negative consequences for followers to follow the leader if they have low self esteem. Nevertheless this factor of transformational leadership is accepted across culture. Transformational leaders are also extremely effective in articulating their vision and providing sense of purpose to the followers to idealize their influence. There are certain ways to communicate a vision leaders vision the followers such as soft spoken manner of Ghandi and bold manner of J. F. Kennedy (Hartog et al., 1999).

These leaders have the capacity to stimulate their followers mind in challenging the old paradigm and accept new one in order to bring change and fulfill the vision. This can also mean that followers in organization are empowered by leaders to be more creative and by doing so bring more value to organization itself and being closer to the desired vision (Fry, 2003). Lastly the leaders that are categorized as transformational leaders are able to recognize the needs of their followers and fulfill those needs by their individualized consideration. This will enhance the trust and loyalty of their followers. High loyalty of followers can realize the achievement or vision and mission in more effective manner which is build by trust between leaders and their followers. This trust is one of the most important variables in leadership (Yukl, 2006 as cited in Jung, Yammarino & Lee, 2009).

Conclusions

Firstly it can be concluded that despite Japan and United States have the same ideology of capitalism, the cultural value of each country have a very significant impact on the Japanese and United States' Leadership style. Though the cultural dimension is treated one by one in contrasting Japan and United states, it is also true that those five dimensions can simultaneously affect the value and belief that is important for both leaders and followers (Offermann & Hellmann, 1997). And congruence in value and belief with the culture increase the effectiveness and acceptance of the contingency theory (House & Aditya, 1997). Secondly there are some aspects of leadership that is acceptable across the cultural differences. For instance the Transformational leadership mentioned earlier. That is affected not only by leaders but also the followers are important factor to consider.

These findings can be used by leaders and managers in organization, especially when they are faced with situation to lead people from different cultural background. It is also not limited only in organizational level but also for personal understanding to better learn and develop their leadership quality.

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