

Book Review

Examining Cultural Influence on Leadership Style and Learning From Chinese Approaches to Management: Emerging Research and Opportunities

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With the growing stature of China's economy and businesses and the internationalization of trade and commerce, it is likely that the influence of Chinese ethical philosophies (including Confucian ethics) will continue to be significant in the future (Chan, 2008). In addition, Chinese leaders may be more affected by other value orientations of Chinese culture, such as Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Since China transformed into one of the leading economies, Western businesses become aware of its uniqueness and the consequences if cultural influences are ignored. This book "Examining Cultural Influence on Leadership Style and Learning from Chinese Approaches to Management: Emerging Research and Opportunities" could provide insights for readers to learn from the Chinese approaches, and to realize distinct characteristics in management styles, which may be the key to success when implementing new management systems or introducing new information technology.

The author starts by giving the readers a quick look at Western leadership research, and then proceeds to the general introduction to this research. From the 778 valid questionnaires collected, the author reveals potential results which can be summarized in the following statements:

1. Leadership styles will be significantly influenced by their culture and values system;
2. The leadership style of the same person could be influenced by the nature of the industry, tenure, and subordinates;
3. Other factors such as the ownership specificity of the enterprise, education level, gender, age, the competitive environment to which the enterprises belong, as well as the geographic locations of the enterprises could also have effect on leadership style;
4. Age and education level of the survey participants have stronger relevance on their leadership styles than all other demographic factors.

In the following chapter, the author presents the details used in the research. Numerous in-depth discussions with Chinese philosophers about the most influential factors in leadership from sources

such as Chinese philosophies and literature allowed the author to establish a Chinese leadership profile. Then modern stories from EMBA students nationwide and managers were collected in order to identify Western or Chinese leadership profile. Both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interviews) methods were used by the author. Comparative analysis of leadership data allows the author to draw similarities and variations from both historical texts and modern stories of Chinese leadership. Then the author provides the definition of a leader derived from other cultures, plus the development of leadership theories in chronological order, and illustrates the main features among different leadership theories.

The third chapter is concerned with the methodology used for this research. The author first explains why the research did not adopt the most frequently used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in the empirical research field. This model had mediocre performance in Chinese culture and therefore the preliminary test results obtained were not very definitive. After further consulting with the greatest giants in culture and leadership style research, such as M. H. Bond, the author decided to adopt Schwartz Values Survey (SVS) as the research instrument and used SPSS as a tool to organize meaningful findings.

One by one, the author introduces several tests to analyze the results from the Schwartz Values Survey. The focus is on finding the correlations between values orientations and leadership styles, as well as the influence of demographic factors on leadership styles. In summary, the nature of the industry, the ownership specificity of the enterprise, the education level, gender, age, the competitive environment to which the enterprises belong, as well as the geographic locations of the enterprises and the tenure in a role could affect one's leadership styles. And among the demographic factors, age and education level have much greater influence on leadership styles than other factors. In the value sets of tradition and universalism significant correlations were only found with company location and company scale respectively; while educational level of the respondents and work ages of the respondents have very strong and significant correlations with almost all ten sets of value orientations.

After the detailed analysis of statistics, the author adds in a case study to give the readers a better understanding of how the research was processed. It is a story about the rise and fall of Xi'an Coin Culture Co., Ltd. (CCCL), starring its director and employees, and with second-hand information from the company and other sources. In this section, the author puts emphasis on the use of storytelling in leadership. Stories are much more memorable than cold hard facts or figures, and good leaders usually have a few good stories up their sleeves. A part of the interview material with the author's analysis is included in the book to demonstrate the actual process of obtaining first-hand data. A set of questions regarding value, rarity, inimitability and organization (VRIO framework) is used to identify the company's resources for business development and expansion. By analyzing the interviews with the director and employees, combined with on-site observation, the author concludes that there is no right or wrong leadership style. This finding again shows support for the conclusion which the author made from the empirical samples of 778 business leaders in China.

In the last chapter, again the author stress that there is no one-for-all leadership style in the world, and also there is no right or wrong leadership style in the real business world. The same person may switch to a different leadership style due to various factors or different scenarios encountered. The research indicates some demographic factors have much greater influence on leadership styles, such as age and education level, as well as geographic location of the enterprise. In the final part, the author sheds some light on the directions for future research. For instance, research among much larger samples and with more rigid procedures for conducting a survey are called for. In addition, there should be more attention focused on the leadership style of younger generations, and investigate if their value systems have shifted.

The author compiles various tables and charts for readers who have only vague knowledge regarding this subject so that they can better understand the context. After the statistical analysis, the author thoughtfully presents some possible explanations or historical background for readers to follow up or ponder on. As the author states, the purpose of this research is to, some extent, fill

the gap in the lack of research on Chinese leadership styles. With 778 valid questionnaires and two years of hard work, the author has some meaningful findings. The case study is worth reading for it corresponds to the conclusions of the research; although the company in the story has faded in glory, through the interviews and post observations, readers can still see the influence of the former leader's leadership style.

REFERENCES

Chan, G. K. Y. (2008). The relevance and value of Confucianism in contemporary business ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 77(3), 347–360. doi:10.1007/s10551-007-9354-z

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