Effective Leadership in Thailand:
Exploratory Factor Analysis of Creativity, Need for Achievement, Emotional Intelligence, and Diversity.

Scholar Report - Kamila Baczek

LSE Asia Research Centre - Thailand Government Scholarship
28.08.2013 – 27.09.2013
Table of Contents

1. Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 3
   1.1 Problem Statement .................................................................................................................. 3

2. Methodology ............................................................................................................................... 5
   2.1 Participants ............................................................................................................................. 5
   2.2 Measures ............................................................................................................................... 5

3. Summery of Key Findings .......................................................................................................... 7
   3.1 Leadership ............................................................................................................................. 7
   3.1.1 What Makes a Leader? ....................................................................................................... 7
   3.1.2 Modern Thai Leaders ...................................................................................................... 8
   3.1.3 Extra Dimensions for Thailand ....................................................................................... 9
   3.2 Creativity and Innovation ..................................................................................................... 10
   3.2.1 Creativity in Organizations ............................................................................................ 10
   3.2.2 Creativity Among Thai Leaders ...................................................................................... 10
   3.2.3 Barriers to Creativity in Thailand ................................................................................... 11
   3.3 Need for Achievement ......................................................................................................... 12
   3.3.1 Strive For Success .......................................................................................................... 12
   3.3.2 Goal – Orientation in Thailand ...................................................................................... 12
   3.4 Emotional Intelligence ......................................................................................................... 13
   3.4.1 What Does It Mean To Understand Others? ................................................................. 13
   3.4.2 Emotional Intelligence in Thailand ................................................................................ 14
   3.5 Diversity ............................................................................................................................... 16
   3.5.1 Workplace Diversity ....................................................................................................... 16
   3.5.2 Diversity in Thai Workplace ........................................................................................... 16
   3.5.3 Groupthink in Asia ......................................................................................................... 17
   3.5.4 Gender Lies in Core of Diversity ................................................................................... 17
   3.5.5 International Experience a Step Toward Diversity ......................................................... 18

4. Implications .................................................................................................................................. 19

5. Conclusion ................................................................................................................................... 19

6. Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................... 20

7. References .................................................................................................................................... 21
1. Introduction

The results of the Global Leadership Forecast Report of 2011 suggested that only 35 per cent of Thai leaders consider themselves as being effective (Boatman, Wellins & Chuensuksawadi, 2011). Those numbers are extremely low in comparison to other countries creating a concern for the future of leadership in Thailand. In the last few years a great deal of attention has been put on this issue. Various sources described the situation as challenging (Roongrerngsuke & Liefooghe, 2012) and stressful (Talergnsri & McKenzie, 2013). Therefore, in order to improve the quality of leadership and be competitive in the global markets Thai leaders need to analyse their management strengths and weaknesses and adjust their current practices to the worldwide standards. Given the current state of the leadership in Thailand it is worth examining the implications of leadership characteristics in the present Thai workplace.

1.1 Problem Statement

The list of effective leadership characteristics is long, however, researchers agree that effective managers have a few crucial competencies: striving for success, creativity, and emotional intelligence (McClelland, 198; Matthew, 2009; Gentry, Weber, & Sadri, 2007). In the Global Leadership Forecast, Thai leaders were asked to identify areas, which they think are critical for effective leadership in Thailand. They also selected: creativity, organizational strategy, and good change management (Boatman et al., 2011). This suggests that Thai leaders are possibly lacking the critical characteristics necessary for them to succeed in their workplace and to make their organization more efficient and productive. Research shows that leaders who have been lacking in certain skills necessary to provide effective guidance for their employees are leaving their organizations vulnerable (Sternberg, 2007). Therefore, leadership development could potentially be needed in order to improve and expand creativity, strive for success and empathy.

Currently, only about half of Thai leaders rate themselves as being effective in one of the areas listed above (Boatman et al., 2011). This suggests that almost 50% of the organizations in Thailand might be dealing with possible organizational issues. Ineffective leadership may have several destructive consequences. Ineffective leaders often engage in
anti-subordinate behaviors and avoid pro-organizational actions (Steel, 2011). Less effective leaders are inflexible and unconcerned about their employees and their needs (Steel, 2011). They only complete short-term goals and disregard company culture. In addition, ineffective leaders lack consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus much relevant to organizations (Howell, Bowen, Dorfman, Kerr, & Podsakoff, 1990). However, in order to avoid ineffective leadership, knowledge about proper behaviors and effective leadership actions should be gained and developed.

Nevertheless, Thai managers are known for taking actions into their own hands when it comes to leadership development. The number of leadership and management conferences in Thailand has been increasing every year. They range from student leadership development programs (EARCOS, 2013) to management leadership conferences (PRweb.com, 2013) and women empowerment workshops (Women's Empowerment Program). Those events are attracting participants from all over the world resulting in great opportunity to learn and share knowledge among each other and develop effective leadership competencies and capabilities.

Although the future of the leadership in Thai organizations looks bright, there is a need to take a look at the fundamental characteristics of effective leadership in Thailand. This research will analyze differences in global and Thai leadership and will investigate crucial competencies of creativity, empathy, strive for success, and workplace diversity in order to evaluate current leadership effectiveness among Thai leaders.
2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The participants of the study were nine successful leaders of small and mid-size family enterprises in Bangkok and Chiang Mai area. Family businesses comprise of about 40 percent of business in Thailand and provide the most revenue (Bertrand, Johnson, Samphantharak, & Schoar, 2008). Leaders came from various sectors of industry including media, legal, politics, human resources, academia, and cosmetics. Leaders’ experiences ranged from one and a half to twenty years in their current role. Also, the number of people who they directly or indirectly supervised ranged from as few as eight individuals to several thousands of people.

There were seven female and two male interviewees. Over 90 percent of people associate ideal leadership with male figure (Taylor, Morin, Cohn, Clark, & Wang, 2008). However, in Thailand over 39 percent of senior management positions are held by women (Grant Thorton, 2012). Since women in Thailand are more participative in the workplace, than females in any other country, it results in more promotions and higher positions among females. Therefore, this study utilized the opinions of women leaders whose numbers grow rapidly in Thai organizations.

All of the participants have spent significant amount of time living outside of the country for educational or professional purposes lasting between one to twenty-seven years in length. Some of them also deal with international clients and employees on an everyday basis. Even though some of the leaders have spent more time abroad than others, their response did not differ in terms of content and suggestions of how to improve effective leadership in Thailand.

2.2 Measures

This researcher analyzed existing literature to understand the gap in knowledge about the development of effective leadership in Thailand. Interviews were semi-structured to allow for open-ended answers. Nine interviews were conducted face-to-face, with an average of forty to ninety minutes long each. Most of the interviews took place at the company site, which helped with assessing work ambiance and to observe leaders in everyday work environments. Our questions pertained to survey asked questions
associated with three traits of creativity, emotional intelligence, and need for achievement as well as levels of workplace diversity. Questions included leaders’ overall view of three traits in the workplace and their personal assessment of those traits. Interviews were conducted in English, which was a working language for all the participants. All conversations were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to identify the emerging themes listed in this report.

The number of interviews was limited by difficulty in recruiting respondents. As indicated by one of leaders, the Thai are not easily trusting strangers and may be not willing to share their career experiences. Even though the sample size of this exploratory study is relatively small, the results still provide informative data about the current state of the leadership in Thailand.
3. Summary of Key Findings

3.1 Leadership

3.1.1 What Makes a Leader?

Before one can analyze effective leadership among family enterprises, it is important to understand what makes an effective leader. Leadership is the process of influencing and facilitating individuals and groups to accomplish necessary tasks in a work environment (Yulk, 2002; Nelson & Quick, 2006). It is about influencing people to do things that they normally would not do. An effective leadership has been described as a holy grail of leadership theories because it results in achievement and completion of collaborative goals (Parry & Bryman, 2006). However, the definition of effective leadership is challenging and many sources address it differently. Bird et al’s. (2010) definition suggests that there are over 17 different dimensions of effective global leadership. To date, the literature has not been very comprehensive in creating a concise definition of effective leadership (Parry & Bryman, 2006). Even though, there are several leadership styles, which could potentially result in effective leadership only one has been distinguished as the most suitable by researchers and practitioners.

The newest approach to effective leadership is the Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Transformational leaders have several prominent characteristics. They have an ability to persuade others to follow and commit to their vision (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Transformational leaders challenge followers by encouraging creativity and innovation in problem solving. Lastly, leaders have the ability to get to know and understand follower’s needs and concerns (Bass B. M., 1995). According to Global Leadership Organizational Behavior Effectiveness research project, Transformational Leadership has been established as a root of effective leadership around the world (House, Hanges, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004).

Given the global definition of effective leadership it is significant to analyze whether Thailand differs from the international dimensions. Studies show that transformational leadership has been successful among different nations, but culture is another dimension that also plays an important role in leadership development (Singh & Krishnan, 2005). This is especially significant in developing countries such as Thailand or India. Leadership
is about socialization and understanding followers, therefore cultural differences and traditions should be taken into account in leadership analysis (Singh & Krishnan, 2005). In order for the leadership to be authentic in a given country, a leader needs to express core values of the culture. Therefore, analysis of cultural differences in Thailand would help to better understand unique leadership approaches of Thai leaders. The next section discusses the Thai culture and its effects on effective leadership.

3.1.2 Modern Thai Leaders

Effective leadership has been a challenge and struggle in Asia. Therefore, researchers from the Center for Creative Leadership and Human Capital Leadership Institute created the “Developing Top Leaders in Asia” report describing key competencies and capabilities necessary for effective leadership in Asia (Center for Creative Leadership and Human Capital Leadership Institute, 2012). Researchers developed five categories including: people developers, relationship builders, strategic enablers, nibble adapters and constant learners. The results stated that, Asian leaders need to have a passion for work and a strategic mindset for recruiting and developing talent: they should possess strong communication skills and develop sincere bonds with both employees and clients: successful leaders know empowering others occurs through responsibilities sharing and delegation, and they value diversity to improve change management and understand that constant learning needs to occur in order to become more effective (Center for Creative Leadership and Human Capital Leadership Institute, 2012).

In this study, interviewed leaders had a similar view of the effective leadership characteristics among Asian countries. They also considered transformational leadership as a great form of successful management (Roongrerangsuke & Liefooghe, 2012). When interviewed they stated that clear goals and directions play a significant role. Vision helps employees to understand company approaches and needs, and help respond accordingly. Leaders should act as trainers who coach subordinates and communicate well with everyone. Open and sincere communication allows relationship building and helps to avoid vague and ambiguous situations. In addition, leaders stated that it is important to work alongside with the employees on different projects. It helps to create a bond within teams and individuals and increases mutual understanding.
The Thai leaders interviewed know their strengths and engaged in implementing well-established practices. They understand that improving what they have already learned and accomplished is very important. In addition, they follow what they preach making their organizations more effective. However, they also mentioned that they are only humans and there are few things in their personal traits that they need to improve on. Nevertheless, being aware of their own flaws and weaknesses makes them more transparent and therefore liked and respected by their employees.

3.1.3 Extra Dimensions for Thailand

Even though, Thai leaders possess similar characteristics as any other global leaders there are few extra dimensions necessary to become an effective leader in Thailand. When entering leadership roles, Thai leaders need to hold on to the old traditions in order to have a mix of both effective Western practices and important Thai values. Maintaining healthy, strong relationships and traditions plays a significant role in Thai society. One of the traditions puts especially high emphasis on relations between leaders and employees. “Bunkhun”, which refers to obligation and need to take care of others, is one of the most important traditions explaining the pattern of relationships among Thais (Roongrerngsuke & Liefooghe, 2012). Close relationships are very significant because they carry kindness and sincerity. Even though, one gives a favour to another, they do not expect anything in return. This is also associated with “Namjai” - a tradition of showing a consideration for others and taking turns in helping (Roongrerngsuke & Liefooghe, 2012). In organizations not only employee needs to work hard, but also show gratitude for the leader. Managers and supervisors should also respect and show understanding for their subordinates. This indicates that in order to become an effective leader in Thailand one needs to make sure they pay special attention to networking and relationships building.

Current leaders are aware that keeping traditional values is necessary in order to become an effective leader in Thailand. However, traditionalism alone is not enough. Therefore, there is a need to evaluate if leaders also practise global values of creativity, empathy and need for achievement.
3.2 Creativity and Innovation

3.2.1 Creativity in Organizations

Three dimensions have been found to be especially necessary in order to become an effective leader. The first of them is creativity. Creative leaders have been found to be successful in guiding the change in organizations by risk taking and avoiding resistance to ambiguity. In highly innovative environments, teams led by innovative leaders have a greater tendency to make good decisions and have more trust through open communication (Nelson, Wood, & Gabris, 2011). Therefore, creativity was found to be a strong predictor of leadership in successful change management (Mathew, 2009).

In today’s organizations high value is put on creativity and innovation (Mok & Morris, 2010). Many firms experience rapid changes and in order to adjust to current expanding markets they need new, creative ways to solve the problems (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). Nowadays, modern management from the West is influencing Thai leadership (Roongrerngsuke & Liefooghe, 2012). Therefore, leaders need to be flexible in order to combine both, new and old traditions in the workplace.

3.2.2 Creativity Among Thai Leaders

Even though, Thai leaders consider themselves as being less creative than other global leaders, they understand the need for nurturing creativity and innovation in the workplace (Boatman, Wellinis, & Chuensuksawadi, 2011). In our study participants have indicated that creativity plays a significant role in organizational life regardless of the sector of the industry. Individuals have presented various examples of their creativity in workplace ranging from innovative resolution for budget gaps to original promotion of the company on the global market. Special attention should be directed to the fact that creative problem solutions presented by leaders always involved engaging other employees and subordinates to overcome the issues. Working together was not only introduced as means to finish the project, but also to help with improving company spirit and to increase involvement. Studies show that when all employees take part in various company projects they feel as a part of the whole and become more productive and efficient (Gollan, Lewin, Marchington, & Wilkinson, 2010). This proves that Thai leaders have innate understanding
that involvement is an important part of organizational culture and creativity.

3.2.3 Barriers to Creativity in Thailand

Unfortunately, creativity in Thai organizations has several barriers. Some of the listed reasons why creativity may not be widely spread in organizations were the long-standing traditions of patron-client relationship and seniority. The emergence of this system dates back to the Sukhothai Period (thirteenth century) being long engraved in Thai history (Roongrerngsuke & Liefoghe, 2012). At that time, kings who governed Thailand were viewed by the nation as protectors and advisers. The social structure became horizontally stratified wherein the relationship the clients have become devoted and fully respectful to their patrons (Roongrerngsuke & Liefoghe, 2012). Even though, the tradition of such relationship is highly valued in Thai culture, current organizational leaders indicate that it also can also cause a problem for emergence of creativity and innovation. For example, “Krengjai”, one of the Thai values that encourages conflict avoidance, was indicated as one of the biggest barriers to creativity. This multilayer concept describes the consideration for others, unwillingness to impose upon others, especially with higher status and avoidance of making others uncomfortable (Roongrerngsuke & Liefoghe, 2012). It occurs when a client is reluctant to ask the patron for help, or avoids questioning senior’s decision. Even though, “Krengjai” could possibly help to softly resolve organizational issues due to no conflict attitude, it also hinders creativity due to lack of communication.

Nevertheless, current organizational leaders are aware of the problems and have ready solutions of how to increase creativity. They suggest that having diversity in idea generation could result in a greater productivity and efficiency. Therefore, exchange of ideas between seniors and subordinates could improve both quality and quantity of ideas. Making all of the workers, regardless of their position with the company, as team members is also crucial to improve creativity. Current leaders suggest that being open-minded and listening to others’ opinion could not only increase creativity but also improve mutual understanding and respect. Moreover, constant questioning of ideas could result in higher innovation and improvements. Questioning allows digging deeper to get to the roots of the problems and help avoiding fixing only superficial issues.
Organizations are looking for the "creative advantage" in the form of creative talent and leaders. Creativity plays an important part in becoming a leader, as well as nurturing others to sustain creativity in the workplace (Mok & Morris, 2010). Researchers and practitioners indicate the need for creativity and innovation in organizations (Mock & Morris, 2010). Thai leaders seem to understand the challenge and have developed systems of improving their workplace.

3.3 Need for Achievement

3.3.1 Strive For Success

Another trait of effective leaders is to strive for success. Studies show that individuals with high need for achievement are dedicated to their work, achieve their goals (Fahed-Sreih & Morion-Delerm, 2012), and are theorized to be the most effective employees in organizations (Yulk, 2002).

Several characteristics differentiate individuals who score highly on the need for achievement scale (Nelson & Quick, 2006). They avoid routine tasks and seek solutions that will be more time effective. They look for more innovative ideas to solve the problems (McClelland, 1987). Individuals set high, but still attainable goals. They also focus on actions that can improve their performance and like to receive feedback. People with high scores tend to plan and hope for their success (Nelson & Quick, 2006). They like being good at what they do, therefore they become experts in their fields.

3.3.2 Goal–Orientation in Thailand

In this study, leaders have shown their understanding of importance of setting high goals. They not only pushed themselves to be successful but also inspired their subordinates to aim high as well. Most of the leaders agreed that goals in organizations should be set extremely high. This way employees will be motivated and stimulated to achieve higher goals. In addition, boredom and procrastination will be also reduced knowing that employees need to put extra effort and time in order to complete the task. Leaders stated that even though they frequently set unrealistic goals, which potentially may not be reached, setting the bar high would drive others to success. However, they have also stated that if the goals are not reached to the fullest they do not punish
employees and in turn celebrate current achievements. In addition, leaders express their admiration for the employees who have put a lot of effort to finish the project.

According to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, Thailand is a long-term goal oriented country. It refers to how much society values long-term over short-term decisions. The concept of “Morn Karn Klai”, which means ‘looking ahead’ has been very important in Thai history (Pimpa, 2012). The strong work ethic comes from this tradition where leaders want and strive for longevity and prosperity for the organization. This is also a reason why employees stay long in organizations to reach the stability and show commitment to organization.

Following this tradition interviewed leaders also indicated the significance of long term goals. They have stressed the importance of looking ahead, scheduling, planning and dreaming in order to improve the organization. However, they have also shown that short-term goals are also crucial. This helps to evaluate the necessary steps of how to achieve the long-term projects. The long-term goals of prosperity of organization can also be seen through the motivational aspirations of the leaders. Most interviewed individuals stated that they get motivated when they achieve a desired target and by seeing their company doing well. They indicated that they get energized by seeing others in the company benefiting and succeeding and by having a good team that supports each other’s efforts.

Effective leaders have been theorized to strive for responsibility and goal-achievement (McClelland, 1987). Thai leaders understand that setting high goals is significant in the workplace. Especially in small businesses the need for achievement had been established as the most suitable predictor of leadership success (Fahed-Sreih & Morin-Delerm, 2012). Studies show that charismatic leaders help followers to envision the future and gain higher need for success through the encouragement of leaders (Choi, 2006). Vision can clarify what goals need to be achieved, resulting in higher need for achievement (Choi, 2006). Thai leaders also encourage their employees though vision and long term goals, which in turn increases their leadership effectiveness.

3.4 Emotional Intelligence

3.4.1 What Does It Mean To Understand Others?

Due to increase of competition and continuous changes in organizations leadership
needs to stay alerted and respond accurately when dealing with international clients and diverse employees. The third most important dimension of effective leadership is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is an umbrella term of useful skills, which help with reading other people’s emotions (Yulk, 2002). Empathy, which is one of the components of emotional intelligence, is an ability to recognize feelings and emotions experienced by others (Pedersen & Pope, 2010). It refers to shared understanding of emotions from one person to another (Yulk, 2002). Additionally, it is a degree to which a person is attuned to his or her own emotions.

Research shows that emotional intelligence is linked to effective leadership (Yulk, 2002). Empathy can facilitate faster problem solving, efficient time management, and help manage crises by facilitating better strategic decisions (Pederson & Pope, 2010). Empathy is especially necessary for leaders to develop good relationships with their subordinates and colleagues, as collaboration is a crucial aspect of teamwork. The ability to influence others through understanding of their needs is a significant aspect of leadership. Empathy helps leaders to develop increased awareness and comprehension to prevent making incomplete decisions and false hypotheses (Pederson & Pope, 2010). In addition, empathetic leaders tend to show genuine commitment to organizations and employees (Lee, 2012).

3.4.2 Emotional Intelligence in Thailand

Some leaders stated that they do not know how to deal with organizational change (Boatman, Wellinis, & Chuensuksawadi, 2011) the reason being their lack of sensitivity to employees' emotions and concerns. However, in the current study all the leaders interviewed have presented high emotional intelligence skills. They indicated that it is especially significant to show subordinates that leaders care for their workers' well-being. They stated that communication and dialog when discussing problems helps with finding better resolutions. High emotional intelligence also helps leaders to see that employees may have some limitations and may not be able to perform all of the assigned tasks. Therefore, understanding of other's weaknesses is an important trait in organizations. It allows leaders to evaluate whether they can push their employees to work harder or take work away and assign them a different task.
Interviewees have indicated that they were able to gain emotional intelligence through their international exposure, while studying or working abroad, as well as spending time with diverse groups of people. Through meeting the different people and seeing their outlook on the world they were able to learn that not everyone is the same and it is important to spend the time to get to know one another. This in turn helped them to become more flexible and understanding in their current workplace.

However, leaders interviewed stated that empathy is significant in the workplace, but only to a certain extent. They stated that leaders should care for employees, but their kindness should not go over the boundaries. They suggested that when leaders are too empathetic employees might take advantage of it. Workers may ask for more days off or request additional leeway on their behalf. Leaders stated that to a certain extent they could and would help their subordinates, but not necessary in organizational settings.

Possibly due to the fact that many Thai companies are family businesses run and pass on from one generation to another, the atmosphere in all other organizations is also family-like. Current leaders mentioned that in their relationship with their bosses they felt as a part of a family. The higher managers have treated them as ‘sons’ and ‘daughters’. They were coached, mentored, and cared for. In current relationships leaders relate to their subordinates as ‘sisters’ and ‘brothers’. Psychologists state that this practice is very common in the workplace in Thailand (Dattner, 2011). Transference is a term explaining why individuals experience re-enacting of their past at work. Especially a ‘sibling relationship’ consisted of both cooperation and competition is very common in workplace. At work like in a family there are rewards, punishments and discipline (Dattner, 2011). Employees get reinforced by managers in a similar manner like at children get at home. In Thailand, children need to respect elders and to obey set rules. Nevertheless, because the relationship between managers and subordinates are very close in the workplace employees feel more comfortable and work more effectively knowing that their managers understand their needs.

Emotional intelligence as leadership competency is a crucial factor when leaders try to express enthusiasm toward organizational change. Wong and Law (2002) call empathy the essential trait for effective leaders. Building relationships between leaders and employees, especially across cultural boundaries, has been proven to be difficult (Brower,
Schoorman, & Tan, 2000). However, Thai leaders understand that close connections can improve the workplace. Leaders agree that empathy helps increase the understanding and mutual respect.

3.5 Diversity

3.5.1 Workplace Diversity

Diversity is another very important dimension, which could help increase all the previously mentioned traits among leaders. Effective leaders also put a great value on diversity in workplace. Diversity in organizations does not only include cultural diversity, but also age, education, gender, and marital status. It can be described as collection of individuals different from each other on number of dimensions (Ayub, Aslam, Razzaq, Iftekhar, & Hafeez, 2013).

Diversity in workplace has a number of positive consequences. In technology and research oriented companies, the diverse workforce facilities high levels of innovation because, as suggested by Morgan (1989), "creativity thrives on diversity". Organizations catering to diversity are also more flexible and adapt to change more easily. In companies where employees come from different backgrounds there is a high level of divergent thinking supporting the importance of wide spread the diversity in the workplace (Lee, 2012). In addition, Lee (2012) states that leaders need to draw on different cultures and backgrounds in order to learn more about emotional intelligence. In organizations where leaders are empathetic, both diversity and equality among workers is widely spread.

3.5.2 Diversity in Thai Workplace

In the Thai workplace, diversity also plays an important role. Leaders interviewed in our study indicated that diversity is very significant. They stated that when employees come from different backgrounds creativity increases and there is a better quality of idea generation. People get to learn from each other and realize that there are different viewpoints and approaches to solve problems.

Most of the leaders agreed that diversity in workplace starts with talent management. They purposely chose people different from each other to work in teams and
groups in order to increase diversity. They also encourage “no hate, no drama” policy where they can learn new things from each other without discrimination and prejudice.

3.5.3 Groupthink in Asia

Leaders indicated that diversity in workplace is even more important in Asia than in other places. Due to lack of diversity companies have been losing efficiency and productivity. Leaders interviewed identified a “groupthink” as a common issue, which occurs when group of people comes to incorrect decision without evaluation of alternative solutions (Parker, 2009). This often occurs when groups conform due to desire or conflict avoidance and conformity as well as lack of diversity. Additionally, often employees chose to be silent and not express their opinions causing their voice to be unheard (Parker, 2009). Interviewees stated that this problem could possibly occur due to traditions of saving face in Asian cultures. Individuals are afraid to be laughed at and embarrassed when offering new creative ideas, therefore they avoid expressing their opinions. This behaviour has been highly regarded in Thai culture for many generations (Roongrerangsuke & Liefooghe, 2012). In history, it has been also used to improve social order. Current organizational leaders advise that this practice should be avoided at work because it hinders organizational effectiveness (Roongrerangsuke & Liefooghe, 2012). Managers and supervisors should encourage subordinates to share ideas of any sort in order to help the company to stand out among their competitors. This suggests that Thai leaders should implement practices of open communications in their workplace in order to avoid common mistakes.

3.5.4 Gender Lies at the Core of Diversity

Today women play a significant role in Thai workplace (Romanow, 2012). Even though currently the number of females in power is not very substantial, women are highly praised as good organizational leaders. With increased numbers of women in the workplace economic growth has achieved a sublime incline (Romanow, 2012). Studies around the world show that women are brought in to power when organizations are in crisis (Brussel, 2012). Women tend to be more empathetic and caring, which helps with resolving organizational issues. In Thailand on average there are more female
professionals in the workplace than in any other Asian country, which Romanow (2012) suggests as a reason for Thailand Kingdom having a stronger advantage of succeeding in corporate leadership.

Nevertheless, interviewed female leaders addressed that it was hard for them to climb the corporate ladder. They had to adhere and follow the rules of the 'man business world'. It was especially tough for the young women leaders to be seen and respected by others, due to the country long lasting traditions of respecting seniority and male figures. They often had to dress to look older and do more work than any other organizational leader. However, they stated that nowadays the inequality is not that big of an issue anymore and females are promoted more often than before (Roongrerngsuke & Liefooghe, 2012).

3.5.5. International Experience a Step Toward Diversity

Current leaders agree that international exposure helps with increasing diversity. All interviewed leaders who have completed a part of their education in another country or worked abroad indicated that they were able not only to increase their diversity but also ultimately improve their creativity and emotional intelligence. They indicated that prolonged stay abroad allowed them to learn new things and in turn see their workplace and their employees differently. They stated that organizations should be providing employees with an access to international networks and firm-specific events to improve cultural knowledge. Organizations should consider implementing cultural trainings, which would be also useful for travel and in other international encounters (Schooley, 2009). Working together on a project would increase mutual understanding, respect, and diverse idea generation (Zander, 2002).
4. Implications

One of the reasons why Thai individuals in the Global Leadership Forecast did not feel like effective leaders may have been due to lack of appropriate training (Boatman, Wellinis, & Chuensuksawadi, 2011). Currently, only one-third of surveyed leaders, who have enrolled in the leadership effectiveness programs state that the training has been effective (Boatman, Wellinis, & Chuensuksawadi, 2011). With increased number of leadership development programs in Asia leaders should take advantage of it and choose the programs that are renowned and which provide great organizational results.

As globalisation broadens (Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004) both organizations and future leaders will have to pay more attention to international and global markets (Arnett, 2002). Therefore, current leadership development programs should explore the opportunities of implementing cross-cultural education programs into their learning and development departments. Early training and education would help to develop more effective leaders of tomorrow and increase international awareness.

5. Conclusion

Currently, there are not many studies exploring effective leadership characteristics among Thai leaders. The present study was designated to be an exploratory study for finding evidence about effective leadership competencies and capabilities of modern Thai leaders. This study introduces the idea that with increased globalisation and diversity in the workplace, leaders need to adjust their current practices in order to become effective managers. Leaders need to pay special attention to the transformational leadership in particular to characteristics of creativity, strive for success, empathy and diversity. The present findings demonstrate that traditionalism of Thai leadership continues to still play an important role. This study also suggests that rigid traditionalism could potentially hinder organizational effectiveness due to lack of effective communication between leaders and subordinates. This paper touches upon relationship, which is conceptually intriguing because it bridges two important constructs of traditionalism and mix of Western management practices. The present research is therefore intended to make contributions to the literature on characteristics of effective leadership in Thailand.
6. Acknowledgements

I gratefully acknowledge financial support received from the Royal Thai Embassy in London with the help of the Asia Research Centre at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). This research would not be possible without your generosity and kindness.

Foremost, I would like to express my genuine gratitude to Ruth Kattumuri, Keith Tritton, and Kevin Shields, for the assistance and insightful feedback for my research. Their guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this project.

I would also like to thank all of my interviewees. Thank you for taking your time and sharing your experiences with me. I will always be grateful for your kindness and help.
7. References


