CULTURAL ISSUES IN PERSONNEL SELECTION

Rugus Bityeno

Personnel selection is an important part of organization systems and processes. It is a primary element of organizational processes. If an organization fails in this first step, then subsequent processes will not be effective. Further processes such as training, job redesign, employee involvement program, or even performing the basic job function will be difficult when the selection is done poorly.

Issues on personnel selection become more complex when an organization is put into a global environment. A global organization is challenged with diversity of cultures in various parts of the world. Within a multicultural context, its complexity may arise from a question on the possibility to find a proper match between the selected personnel and the different cultures of the organization where they may be located. The selection practices of this type of organization in appear in two forms, i.e. selecting employees to be sent to a foreign country as expatriates, or selecting local employees in a foreign branch office. In this level, it is relevant to explore factors related to culture and skills which need to be considered in the selection practices enhance the right matching. The selection practices performed in one country may not be valid for another country, considering its cultural specificity and the relevant skills required.

So far, researches in cultural differences have shown that cultural values play a significant role in the work place (e.g. Hofstede, 1984; Bityeno, 1994; Batane, 1995, Louisville and Novosoli 1984). Based on the findings on cultural influences in work behavior, McEachern (1997) listed propositions that match specific managerial behaviors with cultural work values. He categorizes management behaviors into five elements, i.e. decision-making behaviors, relationship-oriented behaviors, communicating behaviors, motivating behaviors, and influencing theories. The effectiveness to perform the five elements of management behaviors is dependent upon when the organization is put into a multicultural group. Managers from different cultural backgrounds might find it difficult to perform well without proper understanding of the local culture, even though he is the best manager to his home culture.

Cultural differences of behavior/job performance is the ultimate purpose of selecting the criteria in selection processes need to be adjusted by including specific characteristics the culture where the organization is located. The purpose of this paper is to formulate selection strategies for overseas placement or local hire on overseas subsidiary or joint ventures considering local cultural values. The paper will begin with a description of the five dimensions of culture, then followed by the propositions for the criteria for successful working behavior particular cultural setting, and examples of the application of the criteria in a particular case which has a combination of the five dimensions of culture.
1. FIVE DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE

There are five dimensions of culture that has been found as related to work values and influencing work behavior. Four of these were introduced by Hofstede (1984), i.e., individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity. The fifth dimension was introduced by Hall and Hall (cited in Michael, 1997), i.e. polyarchy and authoritarianism.

The individualism/collectivism dimension deals with how individuals perceive their role in the organization or community. Individualistic society assumes individual responsibilities and rights as the strongest values in social interaction. Individuals are encouraged to take action and initiative on their own behalf. Collectivist society stresses the importance of duties to the community or organization rather than rights. In collectivist society individuals are expected to be a member of certain group or organization and making decision based on consensus. As a result they have less individual accountability to the decisions made. Blaming individual on organizational mistakes would not be considered appropriate (Hofstede, 1994).

There are five dominant values in individualistic cultures, i.e., achievement, or individual rights, justice or equity, hedonism, social status, and luxury, while on the other side, collectivist culture also possesses five dominant values, i.e., hierarchy, moderate or equality, humility or duty, consideration or thoughtfulness, and thrift or conservation (Ryssen, 1996).

The power distance dimension refers to the perceived relationship between different strata in an organization/community. Society with high power distance has a strict hierarchy of status and centralized power. Society with low power distance is more egalitarian, less hierarchal and decentralized power (Hofstede, 1984).

The uncertainty avoidance dimension refers to the degree to which people deal with tension and ambiguous situations. Society with high uncertainty avoidance feels threatened by uncertainty and therefore they create mechanisms to reduce risk. In the work place, those mechanisms can be in the form of job security and well-defined work roles and regulations. On the other hand, society with low uncertainty avoidance have higher tolerance to ambiguity and stress, risk (Hofstede, 1984).

The masculinity/femininity dimension refers to the degree to which a society values traditionally related gender values. Traditional masculine values such as assertiveness, achievement, and performance are dominant in a masculine society. Society that stresses the values of quality of life, congenial atmosphere, and cooperation among members are considered as having a feminine culture (Hofstede cited in Michael, 1997).

The polyarchy/authoritarianism dimension deals with different patterns of thinking among different cultural groups. Polyarchic cultures highly value commitment to people and maintaining interpersonal relationships rather than competent to tasks or schedules. Tight schedule is perceived to be disruptive to interpersonal relationships, so they usually sacrifice time commitment for the sake of maintaining relationships with others. Due to involvement with others is important in order to be seen giving appropriate service, for example to clients, friends or employees, information exchanges is highly in a high context environment, which most of the information is implicitly understood by participants (Hall and Hall cited in Michael, 1997). When communicating new ideas or suggestion and especially asking for a favor, they will start with describing the context first, so the communicator will be able to imply what is really the point with the clear understanding of the current or background.

Monoculture culture values linear, rational based paradigm to cope with problems. One effective relationship explanation is an important way of thinking, which is always encourages education and social interaction. Schedule commitment is a serious matter, to the extent interpersonal relationship tends to be in a short-term basis. Information processes occur in a context environment, where significant amount of information must be explicitly transmitted effective communication to occur (Hall and Hall cited in Michael, 1997). Being straightforward and to the point is the prescription of an effective communication, and this followed by reasoning behind that point or the why. In polyarchic cultures understanding the "why" is important, and then the point will follow, sometimes not explicitly. In other words, polyarchic culture has a circular communication style, while monoculture culture has linear communication style.

These five dimensions of culture have implications on work behaviors through values beliefs system, which will lead to motivational practices if people interact with values incompatible cultural background. Since the influences on behavior are not in a direct but culture is often overlooked as the main cause of the problems. But the fact that there is a pattern of significant rates of mistrust toward customers and employees within (Scully and Blacher, 1987) provides sufficient evidence that the development of a strategy to pre cross-cultural problems in performance is urgently needed. Some ways to cope with this problem are pre-conference training, cross-cultural consulting, on-site socialization and select. Among those four, socialization is the most Log effective and preventive way. The part of this article we will discuss several propositions for the criteria for successful cross behaviors in particular cultural setting, to be used as a guideline for selection decisions.

II. CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL WORKING BEHAVIOR IN PARTICULAR CULTURAL SETTING

Based on Michae's paper (1997) on the matching of management behaviors by culture dimension, the following is a list of the necessary skills needed for each cultural dimension in each cultural background, different values and expectations will be discussed in accordance to the criteria on skills needed to perform effectively in a group holding that particular culture. Skills are effective in several cultures but some are counter-effective in certain cultures. The use the following list is on the skills that are viewed or conducive to optimum performance in organization with certain cultural background.

1. Individualistic Culture

Individualistic society expects their members to be independent and responsible for their life and therefore they are expected to fight for their own rights. People expect individuals and encourage the fulfillment of it. In sub-jective-subjective relationship such have their rights and interest in a way that they can get the appropriate recognition from others. In cultural background, supervisors are expected to involve their subordinates in decision making to share the authority. Therefore, delegation and communication skills are important in the cultural setting.
maximizing performance. For example, Management by Objective programs, which emphasize cooperation between boss and subordinate, work well in United States, which has a strong individualistic culture (Househeds cited in Michael, 1997).

Skills to cope with conflict situation are also important in individualistic culture. Especially for an open conflict situation for example in a form of open arguments, conflict is more likely to occur in individualistic culture when the interaction between individuals has conflicting interest, and everybody is strongly held on their individual rights, each party want to win and perceive the situation as a part of the fight for their own rights. On the other hand, in collectivist culture that highly values harmony, conflict situation is less likely to occur.

2. Collectivist Culture

- Ability to understand others or empathy is essential in collectivist culture to maintain harmony people have to be able to put themselves in others position. They are expected to give more consideration rather than direction. Supervisor doesn’t have to tell or remind subordinate about their duty since they already understand. Simple expressions like “It’s your job” or “It’s your responsibility” might offend the subordinates.

- What is expected from the supervisor is high-level understanding of subordinates’s rights, because the subordinate straightforwardly ask for their individual rights it will be considered as inappropriate or impolite. To show this consideration, supervisors might do explaining, mentoring and inspiring their subordinate rather than orders or instructions. Therefore, supporting and mentoring skills are important in collectivist culture.

- Other skills that are obvious in collectivist culture is team building. Collectivist culture prefer group belongingness rather than individual works, especially in order to maintain harmony rather than the task performance purpose. Beneath task performance when doing those building will not sincerely wept because the idea that matter is to be a member of the group itself. Performance will follow accordingly.

3. High Power Distance Culture

- In a high power-distance culture, a leader is expected to have more knowledge, ability and wisdom than the followers do. That is why they perceived to be having higher status in the social hierarchy. When a leader often asks subordinate’s opinion before he makes decisions, because maker decisions, boss will lose respect for being incapable leader. If the leader loses respect, boss will also lose the ability to inspire subordinates, and the result will be a lower motivation that leads to lower performance. To be an effective leader in a high power-distance culture a leader should prioritize the controlling behavior.

- On the other hand, being perceived as having more knowledge, ability and wisdom, boss is expected to do more mentoring and supporting behaviors toward his/her subordinate. Supporting and mentoring skills is essential because they will have a significant impact on subordinate’s motivation, because it is close to a person with a higher status itself will make them feel proud.

- There are three kinds of influence tactics described by Kipnis & Schmidt (cited in Michael, 1997). First is hard influence tactics which characterized by demanding, assertive and sometimes intimating, and even threatening behaviors. Second, soft influence tactics that characterize flattering, behaving nicely, and drawing on their friendship to influence. The third are rational tactics, which uses facts, logic and bargaining to explain why certain decisions or should be taken.

- Managers in high power distance culture are expected to be able to use hard influence to their subordinates, so they can maintain the inequalities between boss and subordinate relationship (Michael, 1997). But on the other hand they are also expected to be able to appreciate soft influence tactics by their subordinate, especially if the manager comes from power distance culture. In low power distance culture soft influence tactics by subordinate perceived as “kissing up” and lose its effectiveness.

4. Low Power Distance Culture

- Communication skills are essential in low power distance culture since equality between boss and subordinate requires a lot more two-way communication. That is why participation management programs work better in low power distance culture. The communication required be in the form of informing, clarifying and monitoring behavior.

- Since the relationship between boss and subordinate is equal, the most appropriate tactics in the rational one. Ability to present facts, use logic and explaining the rational opinion or a two-way communication is highly important to be able to perform well in the job.

5. High Uncertainty Avoidance Culture

- In a society with high uncertainty avoidance, details on every aspect of the job are in because otherwise employees will be anxious. Supervisors are expected to spend more explain what is expected from the job to be done (Michael, 1997). Standard procedures, and detailed data of work results are some of job inputs that are common in, with high uncertainty avoidance. Therefore, ability to deals with and preference to in details is required.

- For a manager to be able to perform well, communication skills that enable them to avoid uncertainty on the job is important. Those communication skills include informing, monitoring behavior.

6. Low Uncertainty Avoidance Culture

- Since in low uncertainty avoidance culture uncertainties are more acceptable, more focus on strategic issues rather than details. A lack of planning action or change performed by those who can tolerate uncertainty. Strategic planning skills would be agent in a low uncertainty avoidance background, and a deliberate strategic planning appropriate.

- Low uncertainty avoidance is also conducive to innovation championing roles (than to managers with innovative ideas will perform best in an organization with low uncertainty avoidance background).
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7. Masculine Culture

Cultures that are masculine tend to attach great importance to earning, recognition, advancement, and challenges (Hofstede cited in Michael, 1997). Schein & Douglas found that individual recognition and performance are emphasized in masculine culture (cited in Michael, 1997). Considering these cultural tendencies, managers are expected to have rewarding, recognition behaviors, and inspiring behavior. Managers who do not have favorable attitudes toward individual recognition and rewarding will not fit in masculine culture.

8. Feminine Culture

Dominant values in a society with feminine culture are personal relationships, group harmony and group performance, and they judge successful behavior by the ability to enhance more about others' welfare and less by self-interest (Hofstede, Kennings & Jaeger cited in Michael, 1997). Supporting and nurturing skills are essential for managers to be successful in their career. Transferring skills are also appreciated for the purpose of consideration rather than task orientation.

9. Polyarchic Culture

This dimension of culture especially deals with the preferences of cognitive processes people take. The most significant behaviors that affected are planning and problem solving behavior. In polyarchic culture managers are expected to be able to think in a broad and situational basis when they make plans to solve problems. As a consequence, planning will take longer time (Dobler cited in Michael, 1997). Managers who are a "let's get going" type won't fit in the polyarchic culture, since patience and thorough considerations are needed. Adding to this, flexibility is also important since the situation will change when the plan is implemented, and when it happens the decisions and actions should also be changed accordingly. This type of planning behavior is called as emergent-type planning by Mintzberg (cited in Michael, 1997).

While in polyarchic culture networking is sometimes necessary if there is dependency toward the party involved in polyarchic culture, networking is part of the social interaction that has to be maintained with a long-term implication. In line with the circular way of thinking, polyarchic culture would say that they have to make as many friends as possible, "Making friends wish him is good. I don't have to know why right now but we never know what will happen in the future." This kind of emergent-type thinking is part of the culture, while masculine culture's way of thinking is "I need a help so I make friends" or at least "I need a friend so I make friends".

Polyarchic culture expects networking skills in a way that it is important for a long term relationship among business partners and with government officers in order to maintain the environmental support for the organization. Networking behavior in polyarchic culture is a way to anticipate environment long-term support for the organization when unexpected problems occur.

10. Monochronic Culture

As mentioned above, monochronic culture prefers to think in a linear way, a cause-effect relationship. It is also concerned with precision and time-sensitive. Planning is where go specified in advance and purposeful activities are performed in a step-by-step process. Managers are expected to be able to concentrate activities into linear format and having a childhood and adult attitude toward planning. This type of planning is called a deliberate-type plan (Mintzberg cited in Michael, 1997).

Reasoning ability is highly valued in monochronic cultures so that every decision made have a sufficient reasoning behind it. People would say why certain plan should be done in a certain decision has to be followed. Initiative managers would not effectively influence other behavior as they do in the polyarchic culture.

The required skills for each particular cultural background mentioned above are not givens in selection process to fill positions in a country different than the organizations country. Those required skills combined with other technical skills should help managew different cultural background to perform as expected by the company.

To provide a clearer picture of how we can use this guideline in practice, in the following be presented examples of a selection criteria considering for Japan with mixed cultural drive the descriptions will only cover the culturally bias criteria, not specific to certain position technical skills requirements are omitted.

III. APPLICATION EXAMPLES

Japan

Japan has a combination of collectivism, modesty, moderate high power-distance, uncertainty-avoidance, and polyarchic culture. This mixed cultural background make it sometimes difficult to understand for American business people, especially when they considered United States in economic growth in the 1980's.

In Japanese workplace some patterns of behaviors are quite typical and worth noting for American business people if they want to do business there. These patterns of work behavior are related to the five dimensions of cultures mentioned above.

Interpersonal relationship in Japan company is highly important, both between subordinate and among co-workers or colleagues. Interpersonal conflict is to be avoided managers should be able to create an environment of trust and harmony. Safe environment open conflict among employees will motivate to perform better.

In order to release tensions from work-life, informal gatherings are important. Japanese workers usually spend more time with boss and co-worker. Formal working hours usually go to a pub to have a drink with their supervisor and co-workers and they can talk issues of work or some social issues as they like. In that informal meeting they can feel free from formal and structured relationship they have at the workplace.

Japan has a "nisei-kosai" or vertical society, a society with hierarchical interrelationships (S. Sato, pers. comm., May 3, 1994). They even use different I
when communicating with persons from different hierarchical status. Respect to those in higher status is a must. Failing to do it will result in a relationship problem, and since relationship is important for business it will also have impact on business performance.

This hierarchy is in a contextual nature, meaning that one person might have low status in one context and high in other context (S. Suzuki, personal communication, May 3, 1996). For example, a new employee that has a low status within the company will perceived to be in a high status when he goes to other company as a customer. Since this status hierarchy is important, promotion and social recognition is very motivating for them.

Considering the above mentioned cultural context, the following criteria for selecting employee to be placed in Japan needs to be employed. 1) non-intrusive skill, especially humility or willingness to put oneself in a lower status position when necessary, 2) networking skills, in order to build and maintain a long-term relationship, 3) supporting and mentoring skills to facilitate social recognition on subordinates, 4) key building skills, 5) flexibility in behavior and decision making and ability to adjust quickly to different context of interpersonal relationship, and 6) ability to work with details and communicate in a comprehensive and detailed manner.

IV. CONCLUSION

There are a lot of evidences that culture differences have a significant influence on performance in multi-cultural working environment. But more researches on cultural influences on work behavior so far are descriptive in nature rather than practical. Practical approach to address this phenomenon is necessary in the future studies on cross-cultural organizational psychology.

Cultural issues in selection is one topic that will attract more attention in the next decades of global market that characterized with rapid change and dynamic working activities. This paper has given an initial contribution but not sufficient to this discourse, so empirical studies following these propositions is recommended.

V. REFERENCES