Characteristics of high performing managers in the Netherlands

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Purpose

Despite the abundance of literature on management it seems that the quality of management has not improved enough to prevent scandals, such as Enron, Parmalat, Ahold and ABN Amro, that have occurred in recent years. It could be that this literature is too Anglo-Saxon in nature, and therefore of limited relevance to management practice in non-Anglo-Saxon countries.

Design/methodology/approach

The research described in this article attempts to identify the characteristics of high performing managers (HPMs) in the Netherlands. Based on a sample of 808 Dutch managers and using the cross-cultural framework of Excellent Leadership by Selvarajah et al. (1995), the profile of an excellent Dutch manager was derived.

Findings

This profile can be described by a five-dimensional factor structure consisting of Excellent Leadership, Managerial Behaviours, Environmental Influences, Personal Qualities and Organisational Demands.

Research limitations/implications

The main limitation of the research is that the findings are based upon reports from a single source; namely managers' perceptions. Hence, common-method effects may have inflated the correlations.

Practical implications

The results of the research have significant practical implications in that organizations can use the profile to tailor their management development programs, evaluation and coaching

programs and recruiting processes.

Originality/value

The need for efficient and effective SPM systems has increased over the past decade and the successful implementation and use of these systems have become of paramount importance to organizations. In this respect, one issue has been underexposed in the literature thus far: the relation between the level of completeness of the SPM implementation and the benefits organizations experience. This paper provides an overview of the main advantages and disadvantages to be expected at various stages of SPM implementation completeness.

Key words: *Excellence, High Performance, Leadership, Managers, The Netherlands*

CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH PERFORMING MANAGERS

IN THE NETHERLANDS

ABSTRACT

Despite the abundance of literature on management it seems that the quality of management has not improved enough to prevent scandals, such as Enron, Parmalat, Ahold, and ABN Amro, that have occurred in recent years. It could be that this literature is too Anglo-Saxon in nature, and therefore of limited relevance to management practice in non-Anglo-Saxon countries. The research described in this article attempts to identify the characteristics of high performing managers (HPMs) in the Netherlands. Based on a sample of 808 Dutch managers, and using the cross-cultural framework of Excellent Leadership by Selvarajah et al. (1995), the profile of an excellent Dutch manager was derived. This profile can be described by a five-dimensional factor structure consisting of: (1) Excellent Leadership; (2) Managerial Behaviours; (3) Environmental Influences; (4) Personal Qualities; and (5) Organisational Demands. The results of the research have significant practical implications in that organizations can use the profile to tailor their management development programs, evaluation and coaching programs, and recruiting processes.

Keywords: *Excellence, High Performance, Leadership, Managers, the Netherlands*

INTRODUCTION

The financial scandals in recent years, the credit crisis, its related subsequent recession, and the public upheaval surrounding excessive bonuses have put the spotlight squarely back on the management of both public and private organisations. Having effective management is critical for a firm to perform well (Armandi et al., 2003; De Waal, 2008; Fey et al., 2001), however, the general public, shareholders, stakeholders and government are all wondering whether the cause for the recent troubles is due to the lack of quality in managerial performance. Despite the abundance of literature on management it seems that the quality of management has not improved, or at least not enough to prevent the mistakes that have been made recently (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003; Endrissat et al., 2005; Heifetz, 2009; Morrison, 2000).

A thorough investigation of relevant literature sources revealed that many of these sources originate from the Anglo-Saxon world, and, even more, from the North-American continent (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2001, 2005; Bass, 2008; Bass and Avolio, 1998; Conger and Kanungo, 1987; Edwards et al., 1989; Gill, 2006; Graeff, 1983; Groves, 2005; Hernandez, 2008; House, 1971; Kerr and Jermier, 1978; Kouzes, 2008; Martin et al., 1981; Northouse, 2009; Pardey, 2008; Sendjaya et al., 2008; Schriesheim, 1982; Studer, 2007; Sweney et al., 1975; Vroom and Yates, 1973;). This literature might work in an Anglo-Saxon context (Morrison, 2000) but perhaps has limited relevance to management practice in non-Anglo-Saxon

countries, and outside North America, because cultural differences have not been taken into account enough (Endrissat et al., 2005; Hofstede, 1980; House and Aditya, 1997; Kuchinke, 1999; Matič, 2008; Palrecha, 2009; Shao and Webber, 2006;). As Hofstede (1993) remarks US management theories contain a number of idiosyncrasies not necessarily shared by management elsewhere: a stress on market process, a stress on the individual, and a focus on managers rather than workers.

Despite the rapidly increasing globalisation of business and industry, there is a lack of cross-national and cross-cultural comparative research on managerial performance. This lack may be partly attributed to the lack of global constructs and theories, the complexity of measuring country-level effects, and the difficulties of cross-cultural research design (see also Kuchinke, 1999). At the same time, there is a strong need for this type of research as its results can provide guidance for improving quality of management (Brewster et al., 1996; McLean, 1991; Peterson, 1997). As stated above, there is a strong Anglo-Saxon and North American bias in career management research, and studies conducted in Europe often apply models and measures developed in these previous studies. These are often translated and used in Europe without their validity being checked. However, the applicability of concepts and their measurements in a non-North American and non-Anglo-Saxon context should not be taken for granted (Boyacigiller and Adler, 1991).

National culture signals different determinants of high performance in terms of the traits, attitudes, and behaviors that people see as valuable (Sparrow and Hiltrop, 1997). Therefore, there is a dire need for academically grounded research, performed in non-Anglo-Saxon countries, and outside North-America, aimed at

identifying the characteristics of high performance managers (HPMs). This should be done in such a way that these characteristics can be used in a practical manner by organisations in their specific context (Blunt and Jones, 1997), and aimed at improving the quality of its management (Ardichvili and Gasparishvili, 2001; Dorfman and Howell, 1997; Hetland and Sandal, 2003; House et al., 1998; Moure e Sá and Kanji, 2003).

More specifically, this article develops an empirically validated profile of HPMs by applying a cross-cultural framework, avoiding the North-American and Anglo-Saxon bias, to a sample of Dutch managers. This article is organized as follows. In the next section the cross-cultural research framework used in this study is introduced. Then, based upon cultural frameworks like those used by Hofstede (1989) and Globe (House et al., 2004), hypotheses are developed which are subsequently tested using a sample of responses from 808 Dutch managers. The article ends with a summary of the results, the limitations of the research, recommendations for further study, and some practical implications of the findings.

THE FRAMEWORK OF EXCELLENT LEADERSHIP

In order to identify the characteristics of HPMs, the framework of Excellent Leadership by Selvarajah et al. (1995) was chosen because this framework is based on a multicultural approach, and because it has both etic and emic traits (Jayakody, 2008). The *etic* approach argues that leadership theories are universal while the *emic*

approach claims that these are culture - or context-specific (Jayakody, 2008). Instead of the terms etic and emic, Morrison (2000) used the terms *generalizable* and *idiosyncratic*. A variation in terminology is suggested by Marcoulides et al. (2004) who referred to the *rationalist* and *culturalist* views, and indicated that leadership practices depend on sector developments, as well as on the uniqueness of a country's culture. Selvarajah et al.'s framework is based upon the assumption that there are leadership factors that are universal (etic), but that these factors are manifested in various overt behaviours which depend on the cultural (emic) context, thus sidestepping the etic-emic dilemma (Javidan and Carl, 2004; Jong et al., 2009; Smith et al., 1989).

The purpose of the Selvarajah et al. (1995) study was to develop factors or dimensions which clustered behavioural values in national and sub-national groups. For this aim, they developed 94 'excellence in leadership' value statements. In their theoretical framework, 'excellence' is defined as "surpassing others in accomplishment or achievement" (Taormina and Selvarajah, 2005, p. 300). Excellence is examined in terms of *behaviours* exhibited by someone in a managerial position, rather than in terms of personal traits or personal characteristics, as the latter are difficult to observe (Selvarajah and Meyer, 2008).

The statements were formulated based on an in-depth study of literature on leadership and management excellence, both from the Western literature (Bennis, 1983, 1989a, 1989b; Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978, 1984; Hollander, 1978; Hunt and Larson, 1979; Kantor, 1985; Peters and Waterman, 1983; Prigogine, 1984; Rost, 1991; Stogdill and Coons, 1957; Takala, 1998; Yukl, 1989), and the Eastern

literature (Bedi, 1990; Ling, 1989; Ling et al., 1992; Misumi, 1984; Mukhi, 1989; Pascale and Athos, 1981; Sinha, 1980; Srivastava, 1983; Swierczek, 1991; Xu et al., 1985). Subsequently, a group of researchers from six Asian countries (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand) explored the statements with the objective of categorising them within broad dimensions, expressing a balanced international perspective rather than using instruments developed for a Western culture. The five broad dimensions identified were: (1) Excellent Leadership; (2) Personal Qualities; (3) Managerial Behaviours; (4) Organisational Demands; and (5) Environmental Influences (see Selvarajah et al, 1995).

Excellent Leadership describes the combination of behaviours and attitudes desirable for good leadership within a certain cultural context (Selvarajah, 2008). *Personal Qualities* are the personal values, skills, attitudes, behaviour and qualities of an individual. They emphasise morality, religion, inter-personal relationships and communication. *Managerial Behaviours* cover a person's nature, values, attitudes, actions and styles when performing managerial duties. They emphasise persuasive powers. *Organizational Demands* are the ways a manager responds to the goals, objectives, structures and issues in an organisation. They emphasise the importance of organisational prosperity. *Environmental Influences* are external factors that influence the success of the entire organisation. They emphasise the importance of scanning and evaluating the external environment for opportunities. The conceptual framework for the study of excellent leadership is illustrated in Figure 1 (Selvarajah et al., 1995).

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The 94 'Excellence in Leadership' value statements that were developed by Selvarajah et al. (1995) were subjected to a Q-sort technique (Kerlinger, 1973), using the above five dimensions as the framework for categorization. This was performed by a sample of Asian managers who were attending executive programs at the Asian Institute of Management in Manila, and at the Vocational Technical Institute (VOC-TECH), the Southeast Asian Management Education Organisation (SEAMEO) institute located in Brunei Darussalam. For the Q-sort technique, all statements were printed three times on small cards, and the managers were asked to sort these three sets of cards in three different ways. The first sorting was used to determine the order of importance of each statement for excellence in leadership. The second sorting was used to determine to which of the four dimensions each statement belonged, and the third sorting was used to determine the importance of each statement in terms of its chosen dimension (i.e., the importance of each statement versus the other statements assigned to the same dimension).

The relationships between the 94 statements and the structure of the summated scales calculated for the five dimensions vary depending on the cultural context in which the managers are working. Therefore, the construction of each dimension differs across countries, thereby providing cultural insights into leadership behaviours and values in various countries, as illustrated by Taormina and Selvarajah (2005), Selvarajah and Meyer (2007, 2008), and Selvarajah (2008). In this article, we have exactly used the approach as explained above, and we expect

the individual items assigned to each dimension to reflect the Dutch context.

HYPOTHESES' DEVELOPMENT

In this section, the hypotheses that will be tested using the framework of Selvarajah et al. (1995) are given. The hypotheses are based on the cultural frameworks of Hofstede (2001) and the Globe project (House et al. 2004). However, first the general assumption of the research has to be tested, that is, whether HPMs in Holland can be described by the framework of Excellent Leadership developed by Selvarajah et al. (1995) (see Hypothesis 1):

H1. A five-dimensional factor structure consisting of Excellent Leadership, Managerial Behaviours, Environmental Influences, Personal Qualities, and Organisational Demands is valid to describe Dutch HPMs.

Culture has been described as "something to do with the people and the unique quality and style of organization" (Kilmann et al., 1985), p. 11), "the way we do things around here" (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, p. 12), or "the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas" (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2003, p. 6). Another frequently used definition is that of Hofstede (2001, p. 9): "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group or category of people from another". To distinguish between national cultures, Hofstede initially formulated four dimensions or distinguishing characteristics, and

later added a fifth dimension (long-term orientation) which was added after the original four to try to distinguish the difference in thinking between the East and the West (Hofstede et al., 2002). The initial four dimensions were: (1) uncertainty avoidance, which refers to the extent to which people in a society feel comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty; (2) individualism versus collectivism, which refers to the extent to which one's identity is derived from one's self as opposed to the group of which the individual is a member; (3) power distance, which refers to the extent to which members of a society accept that institutional power is distributed unequally; and (4) masculinity versus femininity, being the extent to which the social gender roles in a society are clearly masculine (assertive and hard) or feminine (equality, solidarity, and consensus). Hofstede (2001), in his book *Cultures' Consequences,* reported, on a scale ranging from 0 to 100, the results for the Netherlands for the first four dimensions: masculinity versus femininity (14), power distance (38), uncertainty avoidance (53), and individualism versus collectivism (80). These results suggest a more feminine-oriented society with a relatively low power distance, medium uncertainty avoidance, and a highly individualistic culture.

In such a feminine-oriented culture, it is not possible that a manager evaluates the performance of an employee without taking into account the well-being of the person concerned, and there is a strong drive to avoid conflicts by striving for consensus, and being a team-player (Hofstede, 1980). In addition, in a society with such a low power distance, creating an egalitarian society with equality between people is necessary, so that managers and employees are basically considered equal. Subordinates expect to be consulted because their opinions should be regarded as

important by management. This suggests the next two Hypotheses:

H2. In the Netherlands, characterized by a feminine culture, managers who respect and treat their employees well are highly valued.

H3. In the Netherlands, characterized by a low power distance, managers who emphasize consensus are highly valued.

In cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, formal planning systems with procedures, rituals and targets are important. These systems reduce the uncomfortable feelings people experience in unstructured situations (Hofstede, 2001). It also means that employees should be evaluated objectively, because subjectivity raises the level of uncertainty. This line of reasoning forms the basis for the next two Hypotheses:

H4. In the Netherlands, characterized by a culture with a medium level of uncertainty avoidance, managers who emphasize rules and procedures are highly valued.

H5. In the Netherlands, characterized by a culture with a medium level of uncertainty avoidance, managers who emphasize honesty and objectivity are highly valued.

In individualistic cultures people are more self-oriented than organisation-minded, individual initiative and individual decision-making are encouraged (McCoy et al., 2005), and individuals are supposed to look after themselves rather than to remain integrated into a group (Hofstede, 2001). Herewith, we can formulate the following two Hypotheses:

H6. In the Netherlands, characterized by a highly individualistic culture, managers are mainly focused on fostering the interest of their own accountability area.

H7. In the Netherlands, characterized by a highly individualistic culture, managers who encourage their employees to take initiative are highly valued.

Hofstede (2001) has indicated that his cultural framework is not a finished product but, rather, a base for further investigation. Several investigators, such as House and other researchers in the GLOBE project (Javidan and House, 2001; House et al., 2004), have done exactly this, and have followed up on his call for more research. They have formulated nine dimensions to distinguish between national cultures (House et al., 2004):

1. *Assertiveness* – The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational and aggressive in their relationship with others.

2. *Collectivism I (institutional collectivism)* – The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action.

3. *Collectivism II (in-group collectivism)* – The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.

4. *Future orientation* – The extent to which individuals engage in future-oriented behaviours such as delaying gratification, planning and investing in the future.

5. *Gender egalitarianism* – The degree to which a collective minimizes gender inequality.

6. *Humane orientation* – The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring and kind to others.

7. *Performance orientation* – The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.

8. *Power distance* – The degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equal.

9. *Uncertainty Avoidance* – The extent to which a society, organization, or group relies on social norms, rules and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events.

In House et al. (2004), the results for the Netherlands are given (on a scale of 1 to 7): assertiveness (4.46), future orientation (4.72), gender egalitarianism (3.62), humane orientation (4.02), performance orientation (4.46), power distance (4.32), institutional collectivism (4.62), in-group-collectivism (3.79), and uncertainty avoidance (4.81). No additional hypotheses have been developed for power distance, collectivism and uncertainty avoidance as these have been addressed previously. Neither has a hypothesis been developed for gender egalitarianism because this has more to do with the number of female managers and their position in society than with the feminine orientation of a culture. However, new hypotheses have been developed below for the remaining dimensions.

According to House et al. (2004), societies that score higher on assertiveness value assertive and dominant behaviour, have sympathy for the strong, value competition, try to have control over the environment, stress competition and

performance, emphasize results over relationships, value taking initiative, and expect demanding and challenging targets. This leads us to the following Hypotheses:

H8. In the Netherlands, characterized by a fairly high assertive culture, managers who are strong are highly valued.

H9. In the Netherlands, characterized by a fairly high assertive culture, managers who are result-oriented are highly valued.

Societies that score higher on future orientation are comprised of individuals who are more intrinsically motivated and who are willing to learn continuously, and have organisations with a longer strategic orientation, and that are more flexible and adaptive. These societies also value the deferment of gratification by placing a higher priority on long-term success, and emphasize visionary leadership that is capable of seeing patterns in chaos and uncertainty (House et al., 2004). This brings us to the following Hypotheses:

H10. In the Netherlands, characterized by a future-oriented culture, managers who are long-term oriented are highly valued.

H11. In the Netherlands, characterized by a future-oriented culture, managers who are flexible and adaptive are highly valued.

H12. In the Netherlands, characterized by a future-oriented culture, managers who develop themselves are highly valued.

H13. In the Netherlands, characterized by a future-oriented culture, managers who are

visionaries are highly valued.

In societies that score higher on humane orientation, others are important, values of altruism and generosity have high priority, personal and family relationships are important, and people are expected to promote paternalistic norms and relationships (House et al., 2004). This leads us to the following Hypothesis:

H14. *In the Netherlands, characterized by a medium humane-oriented culture, managers who create a family-like organisational culture are highly valued.*

In societies that score higher on performance orientation, results are more emphasised than people, performance is rewarded, assertiveness and competitiveness are valued, giving feedback is seen as necessary for improvement, having a sense of urgency is important, and being direct and explicit in communications is valued (House et al., 2004). Therefore, the last Hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H15. *In the Netherlands, characterized by a high performance-oriented culture, managers who are direct and straight-forward in their communications are highly valued.*

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedure

This study looks at the characteristics of Dutch HPMs at all managerial levels in an organisation. A managerial position is defined as a position in which the person has

at least one subordinate. The research population was approached through the Internet - in the period January to July 2009 - by means of the website of the largest management periodical in the Netherlands, *Management Team*, and through several organisations that were known to one of the authors. The number of people invited to participate is unknown so the response rate can not be calculated.

Neither the respondents nor their organisations were identified in order to protect anonymity, and to increase the response rate. A total of 808 usable questionnaires were received. The respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of the 94 statements in the framework of Excellent Leadership (Selvarajah et al., 1995) in the context of a successful manager, using an importance scale ranging from 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important). As such, the questionnaire explored perceptions of what good management should be (Laurent, 1983).

Of the respondents, 64 percent were men and 34 percent women. 12.9 percent were younger than 35 years, 20.2 percent of the respondents was between the ages of 35 and 40, 19.9 percent between 41 and 45, 20.2 percent between 46 and 50, 24.8 percent between 51 and 55, none between 56 and 60, and 2.1 percent over the age of 60. Of the responding organisations, 59.7 percent were for-profit and 40.3 percent were not-for-profit organisations, 10.3 percent were family-owned businesses and 25 percent were quoted on the stock-market. The largest industry represented in the sample was education (21.3%), followed by construction (10.6%), professional services (10.5%), government (7.7%), financial services (7.5%), production (6.8%), accountancy (5.3%), consultancy (5.0%), healthcare - elderly care (4.8%), healthcare - hospitals (4.7%), information and communication technology (4.5%), and others

(11.3%).

Analyses

The framework suggested by Selvarajah et al. (1995) was tested using Confirmatory

Factor Analysis (CFA) with AMOS version 17. In order to achieve a satisfactory fit,

badly differentiating items were removed from the original measurement scales for

the five constructs (dimensions). According to Byrne (2001), the Root Mean Square

Error of Approximation (RMSEA) should be less than .08, with goodness of fit

indices (GFI and CFI) above .90. The resulting scales showed acceptable reliability

(Hair et al., 1998) with Cronbach alpha values close to or above .70. This analysis

served to support the first hypothesis. The remaining hypotheses were tested by

determining whether the dimensions proposed by Selvarajah et al. (1995) included

the items supporting the work of Hofstede (2001), and the Globe project (House et

al., 2004).

RESULTS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used to investigate whether the hypothesized five

dimensions were supported using the Dutch data. Badly differentiating items (k =

45, see Appendix 1) were removed in order to obtain a good fit for all five

dimensions. As shown in Table I, 'having confidence when dealing with work and

people' and 'giving recognition for good work' comprise the statements that

contributed most for identifying an excellent leader. This is in line with Petzall et al.

(1991, p. 143) who defined leadership as "a process of social interaction between the

leader and his or her subordinates, in which the leader seeks to influence his or her

subordinates to achieve the objectives of the organisation." The item mean is indicative of the importance of the statement to the respondents while the standard deviation measures the variability in the responses.

As Table I shows, Dutch people find 'being honest' and 'giving recognition for good work' to be the most important traits of excellent leaders. The relatively low standard deviations indicate that the respondents are, to a large extent, in agreement about the importance of the various traits.

INSERT TABLE I ABOUT HERE

Environmental influences, such as economic circumstances, political situation, and cultural and legal factors, are external factors that influence the success of the organisation. Table II shows that the statements that contributed most to identifying a person who is excellent in dealing with external influences are whether that person 'has a multicultural orientation and approach' and 'fostering an international perspective in the organisation.' This is in line with the changing business landscape of the past decades (Fontaine, 2007) in which more and more people from non-Dutch ethnic backgrounds have entered the workforce, supporting the historically Dutch disposition for international trade. Dutch people agree that 'being socially and environmentally responsible' is the most important trait when dealing with external influences, an indication of the increasing focus in Dutch society on environmental issues.

INSERT TABLE II ABOUT HERE

Personal Qualities are the personal values, skills, attitudes, behaviour and qualities of an individual. As Table III shows, Dutch people find 'respecting the self-esteem of others' and 'consistency in dealing with people' to be the most important personal traits HPMs should possess. However, the personal qualities of morality, reliability and excellent communication skills are also important. HPMs should respect others, and they should return favours and accept responsibility for their own mistakes. Reliability is exhibited with consistent behaviour in dealings with other people, and calmness during times of crisis. Excellent communication skills translate as clear and concise speaking and writing. The most important personal quality for Dutch people is being perceived as dependable and trustworthy, so that other people can count on that person.

INSERT TABLE III ABOUT HERE

Managerial Behaviours entail a person's nature, values, attitudes, actions and styles which are shown to the outside world when performing managerial duties. As Table IV shows, Dutch people believe that HPMs should be quick at decision-making and decide workloads wisely. In addition, HPMs should show that they are highly task-oriented, good at delegating work, innovative and relatively autonomous. For Dutch employees it is important to have autonomy and managers who trust them to do a good job. This is in line with the move that has been made in

the past few decades towards more autonomy in the Dutch workplace.

INSERT TABLE IV ABOUT HERE

Organisational Demands relate to the way a manager responds to the goals, objectives, structures and issues in an organisation. Table V shows that the best measures for this dimension are 'selling the professional or corporate image to the public' and 'support decisions made jointly by others.' Dutch society is based on consensus and it is very important to generate unity. It is therefore no wonder that Dutch people find 'acting as a team' and 'adaptability' very important because these characteristics facilitate consensus.

INSERT TABLE V ABOUT HERE

Summated scales were constructed for each of the five dimensions: Excellent Leader, Environmental Influences, Personal Qualities, Managerial Behaviours, and Organisational Demands. As shown in Table VI, all these dimensions had reasonable scale reliabilities as measured using Cronbach's alpha. All reliabilities are above .60 which is the lower limit for exploratory research (Hair et al., 1998). In addition, all mean values were reasonably high, and the standard deviations were small, confirming that there is agreement among Dutch managers about the importance of all five dimensions.

INSERT TABLE VI ABOUT HERE

DISCUSSION

Reflection upon the Outcomes

The results that have been outlined above show that the framework for Excellent Leadership developed by Selvarajah et al. (1995) is, to a large extent, valid to describe Dutch HPMs. Following the empirical outcomes of our study, the optimized (45 items were eliminated) Excellent Leadership survey comprehending 48 items (formulated in the form of statements) could be clustered into five dimensions. The research results show that the five-factor structure is a sound representation of the data, portraying reliable factors with high importance for the Dutch situation. This outcome suggests strong support for the first hypothesis.

Table VII gives an overview of the support levels for the other hypotheses. As our approach concerned an exploratory study, for every hypothesis to be tested we have selected those value statements that, construct-wise, appeared to suitably cover the specific hypothesis. For example, support for Hypothesis 8 - In the Netherlands, characterized by a fairly high assertive culture, managers who are strong are highly valued – could be found in the following set of items: EL1 *"Have confidence when dealing with work and people"*, PQ5 *"Deal calmly in tense situations"*, and MB4 *"Make decisions without depending too much on others."* These items all refer to managers who are confident in their work, and thus can be described as managers who are seen by employees as being strong in their managerial duties. As hypothesis 8 is supported by three value statement, it is concluded to be confirmed.

From the fourteen hypotheses in Table VII twelve are supported. Only two hypotheses (H4 and H6) are not supported. In the case of Hypothesis H4 (In the Netherlands, characterized by a culture with a medium level of uncertainty avoidance, managers who emphasize rules and procedures are highly valued), value statements MB9 "*Try different approaches to management*" and OD8, "*Adjust organisational structures and rules to realities of practice*" indicate exactly the opposite of Hypothesis H4, i.e., that Dutch managers are flexible and do not feel bounded by rules and procedures. Probably, the importance of these items for the Dutch context emphasise the changing nature of Dutch people versus rules and procedures. Although, in the Netherlands, rules and procedures are emphasized, as a remnant of former days (in the 1970s; the time wherein Hofstede's framework was developed) wherein official regulations were deemed to be important, in the day-to-day operations of the 21st century, Dutch managers have become much more flexible as regards these regulations, and seem to be inclined to bend them to fit the specific situation and its needs (Pal and Pantaleo, 2005; Pathak, 2005; Taylor and LaBarre, 2006).

As regards Hypothesis H6 (In the Netherlands, characterized by a highly individualistic culture, managers are mainly focused on fostering the interest of their own accountability area), the results of the factor-analytic approach, that showed the importance of the value statements PQ13 "*Follow what is morally right, not what is*

right for self or for the organisation", OD3 "*Share power*" and OD4 "*Act as a member of the team*", indicate that Dutch managers actually think in the interest of the team and the organisation, instead of oneself. This could be caused by the increased interest, over the past decades for teamwork and collaboration, as preconditions to be successful in a modern organisation (Herb et al., 2001; Le Meunier-FitzHugh and Piercy, 2007, 2008; Minguela-Rata and Arias-Aranda, 2009; Morgeson et al., 2005).

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

The main limitation of the research is that the findings are based upon reports from a single source; namely managers' perceptions. Hence, common-method bias may have inflated the correlations, although the magnitude of such effects is subject to intense debate (Crampton and Wagner 1994; Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, most researchers agree that potential risks can be reduced by careful questionnaire design (e.g., changes in the response format, anonymity, and encouraging participants' openness) which we paid specific attention to by testing the questionnaire beforehand with a small group of volunteers, and by stressing specifically the anonymity of the survey.

Additional research is needed in order to establish whether the five dimensions have predictive validity in time, for instance in terms of both managerial as well as organizational success. This should be done using a longitudinal design, in order to test causality. Multi-wave designs (see De Lange et al., 2004) are especially useful in this regard, as they can provide more specific information about the stability of the measurement model and cross-lagged relationships between the

factors of the Excellent Leadership framework and future success, subjective and objective, managerial as well as organizational, over time. An alternative strategy could be to perform a qualitative study to obtain further insight into the importance of the identified statements (items) in the light of future managerial and company performance.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Excellence framework of Selvarajah et al. (1995) has been used to create a profile for the excellent Dutch manager. Organizations can use this profile to refine their management development programs, evaluation and coaching programs, and recruiting processes. In order to create a highly performing organization, each organisational member needs to perform well. In the case of managers, the profile which has been developed in this research clearly indicates the behaviour, qualities and orientation that managers need to exhibit in order to become successful managers.

An organization can now use this profile to evaluate its managers in terms of the required qualities, desired behaviour and orientation. It can also tailor its management development program in such a way that, in time, managers will fit the ideal profile better. Also the organisation can apply the profile during its recruiting process to evaluate potential candidates for management positions, so that new managers will fit the required profile from the start. These strategies will all increase the likelihood that the organization will prosper in the future.

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Appendix 1: The badly differentiating items

7. Be consistent in making decisions
9. Be formal when dealing with employees at work
11. Be informal when with employees outside work
13. Be objective when dealing with work conflicts
14. Be practical
17. Be strict in judging the competence of employees
18. Behave in accordance with his or her religious beliefs
19. Consider suggestions made by employees
25. Follow the heart – not the head – in compassionate matters
37. Listen when employees want to say something
38. Look for and use the positive aspects of other cultures
51. Tell subordinates what to do and how to do it
52. Think about the specific details of any particular problem
53. Treat most people as if they were trustworthy and honest
56. Use initiative and take risks
57. Work long hours
59. Ignore personal morality in the interest of the organisation
60. Manipulate people to achieve work goals
61. Be involved in organisational politics
62. Use rank and power to get things done
63. Think frequently about the practice of management
64. Have formal management training
65. Choose management ethics before self or the organization
67. Negotiate with various professionals and interest groups
68. Make allowance for emotional pressure on staff at work
69. Be prepared to compromise on important work issues
70. Study laws and regulations which may have an impact on work

71. Allow other people time to do things
72. Give priority to short-term goals
73. Be competitive
74. Be sensitive to people of different background
75. Promote staff welfare and development
76. Be skilled in work related technology
78. Check constantly for problems and opportunities
79. Understand and analyse complex problems
80. Think about the general implications of any problem
81. Think about what may happen in the future
82. Develop strategies to gain a competitive edge in the industry
84. Keep to work deadlines
85. Be skilled in public relations
86. Cope with pressures of work
87. Turn up for a 3 p.m. meeting at 3 p.m.
88. Be knowledgeable about work of the industry
90. Respond to expectations of consumers
92. Deal with work problems openly and honestly

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the Study of Excellent Leadership

(Selvarajah et al., 1995)

Table I: Excellent Leadership Items' Factor loadings, Means, and Standard Deviations

Value statement	Load	Mean	SD
EL1. Have confidence when dealing with work and people	.692	4.43	.609
EL2. Give recognition for good work	.677	4.63	.533
EL3. Create a sense of purpose and enthusiasm in the workplace	.661	4.44	.659
EL4. Motivate employees	.645	4.51	.632
EL5. Continue to learn how to improve performance	.596	4.19	.729
EL6. Have a strategic vision for the organisation	.546	4.37	.694
EL7. Organise work time effectively	.521	4.16	.706
EL8. Be honest	.502	4.65	.568

Table II: Environmental Influences Items' Factor loadings, Means, and Standard

Deviations

Value statement	Load	Mean	SD
EI1. Have a multicultural orientation and approach	.723	3.62	.994
EI2. Foster an international perspective in the organisation	.655	3.40	1.112
EI3. Identify social trends which may have an impact on the work	.634	3.93	.708
EI4. Be socially and environmentally responsible	.581	4.14	.733
EI5. Use economic indicators for planning purposes	.522	3.61	.855
EI6. Be responsive to political realities in the environment	.466	3.84	.846
EI7. Constantly evaluate emerging technologies	.454	3.31	.935

Table III: Personal Qualities Items' Factor loadings, Means, and Standard Deviations

	Factor with value statements	Load	Mean	SD
PQ1.	Respect the self-esteem of others	.616	4.45	.597
PQ2.	Be consistent in dealing with people	.594	4.32	.725
PQ3.	Accept responsibilities for mistakes	.577	4.53	.611
PQ4.	Speak clearly and concisely	.577	4.05	.716
PQ5.	Deal calmly in tense situations	.576	4.22	.665
PQ6.	Be dependable and trustworthy	.573	4.79	.464
PQ7.	Write clearly and concisely	.571	3.95	.747
PQ8.	Listen to the advice of others	.530	4.14	.666
PQ9.	Return favours	.525	3.46	.914
PQ10.	Accept that others will make mistakes	.499	4.28	.723
PQ11.	Be an initiator, not a follower	.448	4.24	.727
PQ12.	Have a sense of humour	.467	4.05	.713
PQ13.	Follow what is morally right, not what is right for self or for the organisation	.465	3.40	.949

Table IV: Managerial Behaviours Items' Factor loadings, Means, and Standard Deviations

Factor with value statements	Load	Mean	SD
MB1. Make work decisions quickly	.609	3.76	.767
MB2. Select work wisely to avoid overload	.540	3.69	.836
MB3. Make decisions earlier rather than later	.538	3.45	.859
MB4. Make decisions without depending too much on others	.534	3.49	.874
MB5. Trust those to whom work is delegated	.526	4.38	.622
MB6. Listen to and understand the problems of others	.510	4.10	.709
MB7. Focus on the task-at-hand	.496	3.56	.823
MB8. Delegate	.491	4.27	.666
MB9. Try different approaches to management	.477	3.54	.976
MB10. Persuade others to do things	.472	3.54	.814
MB11. Keep up-to-date on management literature	.471	3.24	.946
MB12. Be logical in solving problems	.467	3.90	.751
MB13. Allow subordinates authority and autonomy	.437	4.48	.617

Table V: Organisational Demands Items' Factor loadings, Means, and Standard

Deviations

	Value statement	Load	Mean	SD
OD1.	Sell the professional or corporate image to the public	.679	4.14	.795
OD2.	Support decisions made jointly by others	.637	4.04	.747
OD3.	Share power	.592	3.58	.953
OD4.	Act as a member of the team	.579	4.36	.721
OD5.	Adaptability	.556	4.32	.668
OD6.	Give priority to long-term goals	.516	3.93	.759
OD7.	Focus on maximising productivity	.483	3.65	.793
OD8.	Adjust organisational structures and rules to realities of practice	.454	3.65	.874

Table VI: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for the Five Dimensions

	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Cronbach's alpha
Excellent Leader (EL)	808	4.422	.388	.75
Environmental Influences (EI)	808	3.693	.516	.67
Organisational Demands (OD)	808	3.958	.445	.69
Personal Qualities (PQ)	808	4.145	.379	.78
Managerial Behaviours (MB)	808	3.800	.401	.75

Table VII: Matching hypotheses with value statements

(H2 – H7 are derived from Hofstede (2001); H8-H16 from House et al. (2004))

Hypothesis	Value statements which support the hypothesis	Confirmed?
H2. In the Netherlands, characterized by a feminine culture, managers who respect and treat their employees well are highly valued.	EL2. Give recognition for good work PQ1. Respect the self-esteem of others PQ2. Be consistent in dealing with people PQ8. Listen to the advice of others PQ10. Accept that others will make mistakes MB5. Trust those to whom work is delegated MB6. Listen to and understand the problems of other MB13. Allow subordinates authority and autonomy *All value statements refer to managers being interested in their employees*	Yes
H3. In the Netherlands, characterized by a low power distance, managers who emphasize consensus are highly valued.	OD2. Support decisions made jointly by others OD3. Share power OD4. Act as a member of the team *All value statements refer to managers willing to be part of a team which requires*	Yes

		consensus	
H4.	In the Netherlands, characterized by a culture with a medium level of uncertainty avoidance, managers who emphasize rules and procedures are highly valued	MB9. Try different approaches to management OD8. Adjust organisational structures and rules to realities of practice *Both value statements indicate flexibility of management, and therefore do not support the hypothesis*	No
H5.	In the Netherlands, characterized by a culture with a medium level of uncertainty avoidance, managers who emphasize honesty and objectivity are highly valued	EL8. Be honest PQ2. Be consistent in dealing with people PQ6. Be dependable and trustworthy PQ13. Follow what is morally right, not what is right for self or for the organisation *All value statements refer to managers doing the right thing*	Yes
H6.	In the Netherlands, characterized by a highly individualistic culture, managers are mainly focused on fostering the interest of their own accountability area.	PQ13. Follow what is morally right, not what is right for self or for the organisation OD3. Share power OD4. Act as a member of the team *The three value statements indicate management thinking in the interest of the*	No

		team and the organisation, and therefore do not support the hypothesis	
H7.	In the Netherlands, characterized by a highly individualistic culture, managers who encourage their employees to take initiative are highly valued.	MB8. Delegate MB13. Allow subordinates authority and autonomy *Both value statements refer to managers willing to delegate authority so that employees can take the initiative*	Yes
H8.	In the Netherlands, characterized by a fairly high assertive culture, managers who are strong are highly valued.	EL1. Have confidence when dealing with work and people PQ5. Deal calmly in tense situations MB4. Make decisions without depending too much on others *All value statements refer to managers being sure of themselves*	Yes
H9.	In the Netherlands, characterized by a fairly high assertive culture, managers who are result-oriented are highly valued.	PQ11. Be an initiator, not a follower MB1. Make work decisions quickly MB3. Make decisions earlier rather than later MB7. Focus on the task-at-hand MB10. Persuade others to do things OD7. Focus on maximising productivity *All value statements refer to managers being focused on achieve results*	Yes

H10. In the Netherlands, characterized by a future oriented culture, managers who are long-term oriented are highly valued.	EL6. Have a strategic vision for the organisation EI6. Be responsive to political realities in the environment *All value statements refer to managers who look into the future, taking into account developments*	Yes
H11. In the Netherlands, characterized by a future oriented culture, managers who are flexible and adaptive are highly valued.	EL5. Continue to learn how to improve performance OD5. Adaptability OD8. Adjust organisational structures and rules to realities of practice *All value statements refer to managers who are willing to learn and adapt*	Yes
H12. In the Netherlands, characterized by a future oriented culture, managers who develop themselves are highly valued.	EL5. Continue to learn how to improve performance EI5. Use economic indicators for planning purposes EI7. Constantly evaluate emerging technologies MB9. Try different approaches to management MB11. Keep up-to-date on management literature *All value statements refer to managers who are willing to learn and improve*	Yes
H13. In the Netherlands, characterized by a future oriented culture, managers who are	EL6. Have a strategic vision for the organisation EI3. Identify social trends which may have an impact on the work	Yes

visionaries are highly valued.	*Both value statements refer to managers who have ideas about the purpose of their organization*	
H14. In the Netherlands, characterized by a medium humane oriented culture, managers who create a family-like organisational culture are highly valued.	EL3. Create a sense of purpose and enthusiasm in the workplace PQ9. Return favours PQ12. Have a sense of humour *All value statements refer to managers who create a positive environment and atmosphere*	Yes
H15. In the Netherlands, characterized by a highly performance oriented culture, managers who are direct and straight-forward in their communications are highly valued.	PQ4. Speak clearly and concisely PQ7. Write clearly and concisely *Both value statements indicate the importance of clear communication, either verbally or written, which can be seen as preconditions for direct and straight-forward communication (which is also clear)*	Yes