

# The Core Values Method within the Sufficiency Economy and Thai Societal Values

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**Abstract.** *This paper presents the core values method as a human resource development (HRD) initiative for the Thai context. In particular, the paper acknowledges the countermanding force of the sufficiency economy principle in combating the reported excesses of globalization and the capitalist ethic. A brief history of the development of job related training is presented, leading on to the change in discourse to human resource development. Thai business is interwoven with Buddhist values which are relational in nature, focusing on human qualities of graciousness and compassion. Writers on human resource development in Thailand support the values-driven approach to organizational development and within that, human resource development. The core values method (CVM) was designed for culture building and culture binding. A central feature of the CVM is of participation and ownership, recognising in particular, three stakeholding groups - managers, employees and customers. A step by step process is explained, beginning with values generation of each of the stakeholding groups and culminating in two confirming exercises. One is a mapping process such that organizational activities are mapped to organizational values and Thai values. From there, a matrix is produced such that values from the sufficiency economy principle, Thai values and organizational values are present across a range of organizational activities.*

**Key Words:** Human resource development; Thailand; Core values method

## Introduction

This paper examines possibilities of using a particular western human resource development initiative, the core values method (CVM) in a Thai setting. Central to the development of an organization is its methodology for culture building and culture binding (Whiteley, 1995). Also, at this stage of Thailand's economic development and especially the recognition of social as well as financial sustainability (Whiteley & McCabe, 2001), the methodology needs to be harmonious with workplace values. The core values method (CVM) has been tried and tested many times (Whiteley & Whiteley, 2007) but its conceptualization was within the western secular environment. What this means is that if the CVM is applied to a Thai organization, it needs to be in harmony with Thai societal values.

The three narratives in this paper intersect. The first is a brief history of training and human resource development in the West (US and Europe). The second is the cultural narrative of Thai

values (Komin, 1990) and the impact of culture on organizational design (Boode, 2005). The third narrative is the core values method (CVM) which will be described in terms of how practitioners would proceed. A modification of CVM is made to accommodate Thai values.

Before proceeding, reference will be made to the unique and countermanding power of the Thai 'sufficiency economy' philosophy to offset what writers are referring to as the adverse effects of globalization within the capitalist ethic. Thailand is outstanding in its transparent and comprehensive social and economic strategic planning, operationalized by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESBD). More importantly for human resource development is that the plan is linked to philosophy. The philosophy is called the 'sufficiency economy' (SE) (Pruetipibultham, 2010, p. 99) and it was proposed by Thailand's beloved His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. With great foresight, the sufficiency principle is designed to counter the negative effects of unre-

stricted globalization. Non-sustainable practices, often a feature of western planning, are recognised as being responsible for many social and economic ills (Brayshay, Rob, & Nigel, 2009; Milanovic, 2003; Rose-Ackerman, 2002; Wilpert, 2009). As Pruetipibultham (2010) recounts, Thailand, like many Asian countries, has lived through the turmoil experienced by many Asian countries after 1997, when the Baht was devalued. Niffenegger, Kulviwat, & Engchanil (2006). comment that

Thailand is now in a critical period, facing the need to restore stable economic growth and prosperity after the disastrous devaluation of the Baht in 1997, and the subsequent recession that followed. To do so will require a careful and artful blending of new capitalist methods with traditional Buddhist values, a new economic synthesis of eastern and western values. (Niffenegger et al. 2006, p.403)

From a human resources point of view, the response to financial crises is often to denude the training and development of managers and employees which is the very thing that makes organizations competitive and innovative (Miles, Miles, Snow, Blomqvist, & Rocha, 2009). At the same time, it is possible to stand back and assess what chaos and complexity theorists call Thailand's 'initial conditions' (Napoli, Whiteley, & Johansen, 2005). Initial conditions in this sense refer to the immutable values that act as a backdrop to doing business in Thailand. One such initial condition has been voiced and carried forward by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej as the 'sufficiency economy principle'. This principle differentiates Thailand's aspirations from the 'profit at all costs' capitalist ethic criticised by writers such as Grace & Cohen (2010) and Hendry (2004) and from a management perspective Argyris (2004). This consideration is important because whilst organizations want to harness the strengths of people they also want to avoid latent systemic conflict from competing values (Rohrbaugh, 1981). It is often reported that deeply held societal and personal values will overpower organizational values, especially when these are in conflict (Boode, 2005; Elkington, 2003; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997; Komin, 1990). On this basis, strategic human resource development (and the CVM) will happen within a systemic set of societal values to which Thai managers and employees owe allegiance.

The sufficiency economy, explained later, is possibly an under-recognized countermending force to the extremes and ideals of the capitalist quest for profit and growth (Dolan & Raich, 2009). These authors argue against the sort of growth with which we are now familiar and say that competitive organizations, whether explicitly or not, rely on false assumption of infinite energy and resources. Lefkowitz (2006) and Zimmerli, Richter, & Holzinger (2007), approaching from an ethical standpoint describe the lengths to which organizations will go to 'manage impressions' of success even to the extent of fraudulent behavior (Grace & Cohen, 2010; Shaw, Barry, & Sansbury, 2009). The human cost of a capitalist crisis is the loss of wealth, jobs, reputations, productive resources and public faith in economic institutions (Lefkowitz, 2006). The sufficiency economy goes straight to the heart of protection against what researchers call the short term view (Dolan and Raich, 2009). This view is indicative of western values and fuelled by the 'success' of self-interest and the ever-present growth. Gini (1998) reported that over one half of business executives surveyed knew other executives who bent the rules of traditional morals in order to 'get ahead'.

Implied in the sufficiency principle, is an answer to the question "When is enough enough"? The answer in this case is when both the needs of the community and financial sufficiency are met in a sustainable way. Some societies, and Thai is one, integrate societal and religious core values into their lives, whether they are at home or at work (Falk, 2010; Komin, 1990; Kramar, 1993; Niffenegger et al., 2006). Such is not universally the case in Western societies which are heavily connected to the capitalist business ethic (Brayshay et al., 2009; Wilpert, 2009). In terms of human resource development, does this matter when an organization wants, like others worldwide, to be competitive and successful? Why not just use task related training like other organizations do? This raises another question as to why, in the West, training and then human resource development are not historically entwined with human values to the extent of Asian cultures? (Srinivasan, 2008). A brief account of the history of training followed by human resource development in the West provides an explanation.

## The Historical Development of Training and Human Resource Development.

### Training

Frank (1988) recounts the early history of training in the US and Europe. Training was historically (and not always uncritically), linked to the precepts of scientific management (Taylor, 1911), Fordism (Clarke, 1990) and the hegemony of the technical over the social. This was a position challenged by later writers such as Emery & Trist (1973); Trist (1981) and Emery (1993). Frank tells the story of the industrial era in the US in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century where one of the first 'factory schools' was followed by cooperative education in various industrial guilds (for example engineering, toolmaking and other trades). From this came apprenticeship training. Various events (including the Second World War) shaped the structure of industry. In-house training by supervisors took advantage of the 'new technologies' of recording, videotapes and educational television. The instructional paradigm developed where training was studied, programs were developed and organizations such as the *American Society for Training and Development* fostered professionalism of theory and practice. By the 1940's, reports such as the Hawthorne Studies (Mayo, 1945; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939) linked performance to both personal motivation and group processes. Results were still very much job related such as job enrichment, (Herzberg, 1966; Herzberg, Mausner, & Synderman, 1959), job characteristics (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), and group processes (Van de Ven & Delbecq, 1971). By then, the emphasis had moved from job based training to include the idea of developing the workforce for qualities such as adaptability and employee empowerment. As Mukhopadhyaya (2009, p.1) writes:

*A training program is designed to assist in providing solutions for specific operational problems or to improve performance of a trainee. Given the positive outcomes of training in the organization, together with the assumptions of scientific management that employees (and managers) were rational economic beings, motivated by money and the most efficient ways to earn it, there was very little impetus to invest organizational resources on personal and possibly intangible growth of individuals.*

In summary: The capitalist training ethic is a

short term process. It refers to instruction in technical and mechanical problems and is targeted in most cases at non-managerial personnel. There is a specific job related purpose. Other purposes include to improve productivity and to improve quality such that better trained workers are less likely to make operational mistakes. Through the improved performance, better financial rewards can be given which in turn would have a positive effect on morale. An important purpose for training is to promote health and safety (Mukhopadhyaya, 2009)

### Human resource development (HRD)

HRD represents a change in discourse from training, at the same time as being inextricably bound up with it. In this case we could say that training is necessary but not sufficient in preparing employees and managers beyond the immediate needs of the job. HRD is based on assumptions of adult learning principles where people will meet experiences that will change behaviours (Frank, 1988 ). The activities of HRD are in an organizational setting "concerned with improvement of people's performance on the job, as opposed to using learning experience to improve people's health or improve their relations with their family" (Frank, 1988, p.4). A differentiating feature of HRD is that the practice of development is linked to change.

Furthermore Frank (1988 ), maintains that the move from training to human resource development constitutes a change in the values held by managers towards people in the workforce. These include a change in values such as:

*From considerations of quantity towards those of quality;*

*From independence towards recognition of interdependence;*

*From a prime goal of technical efficiency towards consideration of social justice and equity;*

*From demands of organizational convenience towards the self-development of individual members;*

*From authoritarianism towards participation;*

*From work as a duty and necessity towards work as a self-fulfilling activity.*

(Frank, 1988, p.49).

Burack (1991) comments on the need for integration of HRD programs with organisational self-knowledge,

*Human Resource Development (HRD) has a crucial, challenging role to play in successfully 'orchestrating' strategic culture change. Organization culture change has been attempted increasingly, unfortunately, quite often with poor results. Misapplication or poor understanding of culture structures and processes and its built-in 'mechanisms' resisting change have contributed to these abuses. Widespread use of short range thinking and quick-fix solutions, lack of data on organizational processes, or failure to deal initially with more basic business problems have added further to these difficulties. (Burack, 1991, p.88)*

His comment brings to the fore the dominant difference between HRD and training, which is organizational change. An issue that we, in western literature, tend to take for granted is that managers have a deep and succinct understanding of the culture of their organizations. This is not necessarily so suggests Burack (1991) and yet it needs to be so. Not surprisingly, a strong link exists between organizational development (in terms of vision, mission, strategy, systems and processes) and human resource development at the micro level. To emphasize the importance of Burack's concept of HRD we reproduce his list of key organizational activities which should take place in an organization focusing on change.

**Table 1. HRD Activities and Organizational Change**

<p><i>Step 1. New Directions</i></p> <p>HRD dissects culture and consequences of needed changes.            Top management presents its agenda and need for culture change in a graphic and understandable way. Deals with survivor issues ('why me?').            Anticipates value conflicts with sub-cultures and prepares to deal with these slowly and selectively.            Action research to build newer base lines and data for key employee satisfaction and performance information base            Starts to incorporate change in basic processes such as decision making-to serve eventually as identifiable features of the newer culture.</p>
<p><i>Step 2. Consolidation</i></p> <p>Corporate wide rotation of various officials, managers and specialists to broaden perspective, spread the change message, and facilitate new learning.            Mixed, joint meetings of key functional groups e.g. marketing and operations.            Circulation of articles and news abstracts to all employees regularly-communicate needs, current state of change and future directions.            Presentation of 'early' financial results and internal case studies to pinpoint needed changes and facilitate group problem solving. Internal education and training programmes.            CEO and key officials continue to serve as models of leadership thinking and action.            HRD presentations covering new staffing, career paths, development, and implications for individual change.            Enact climate change which item by item reinforce newer values and beliefs and expected behaviours</p>

*Step 3. Reinforcement*

Internal education and training programmes 'institutionalized'

New recognition meetings, programmes communications which reinforce new directions, processes and relationships.

Strengthens employee (self) sufficiency skills through career counselling.

(Burack, 1991, p.94)

Many writers and scholars have contributed to our understanding of HRD both in terms of theory, culture and developing countries (Ingram & Baldwin, 1996; London, 1994; McDaniel, 1984; Rowley & Warner, 2004). In addition to this are scholars who are writing on HRD in Thailand (Curry & Sura, 2007; Niffenegger et al., 2006; Pruetipibultham, 2010) and organizational design Boode (2005). They pay particular attention to Thai values and the internal/external principles underlying them.

There will always be a value system governing societal and organizational life. In the West, the industrial revolution of the 19th century was juxtaposed by Enlightenment thinking which was predominantly linear and scientific (Tarnas, 1991). It valued qualities of objectivism, and impersonality, expressed both in societal and organizational social structures and functions. At this time there was very little human relatedness factored in to organizational processes. What differentiates Thailand from development in Western countries are Buddhist values which, researchers say, are deep and meaningful in explaining life and death and rich in symbolism and ceremony (Falk, 2010). Falk's study focused on Buddhism's role in the recovery process after the tsunami of 2004 and it is often said that it takes adversity to bring to the fore values and allegiances not normally brought

to the surface, certainly in organizational life.

### **The Nature of Culture**

Across the range of writers on culture, one theme dominates - that culture is multifaceted and complex. The complexity includes multilayered, deep and generative elements and manifests itself in patterns of ideas, emotional responses, as well as what seems like an instinctive, *a priori* grasp of the norms and symbols that somehow are understood by insiders such that they 'just know' (Giddens, 1984). This 'knowability' is tacit and yet, to those inside cultural norms and values, takes on concrete form. This, we propose, is the outer rim of culture. As Komin (1990) writing on Thai culture and work related values suggests

Culture, as the end product of a society generally refers to the total patterns which make a society distinct... [It] serves as a framework for shaping and guiding the thoughts actions, and practices as well as the creativity of its members. It is transmitted, learned and shared [and as such] people are culturally conditioned. (Komin, 1990, p.683)

In society, children and adults learn and internalise their 'lessons' through the various socialisation activities in table 2, that we might call 'key organising principles', KOPS, (Whiteley, 2001, p. 7).

**Table 2. Societal and Organizational Key Organizing Principles (KOPS)**

SOCIETAL	ORGANIZATIONAL
Religion	Ethics
Social relational	Communication Job design Management style
Educational	HDR strategies Training
Status and role	Hierarchies Structure Power
Time	Work home boundaries
Exchange transactions	Contracts Reward systems
Technology	ICT* Tasks Tools
Legal	Policies, rules

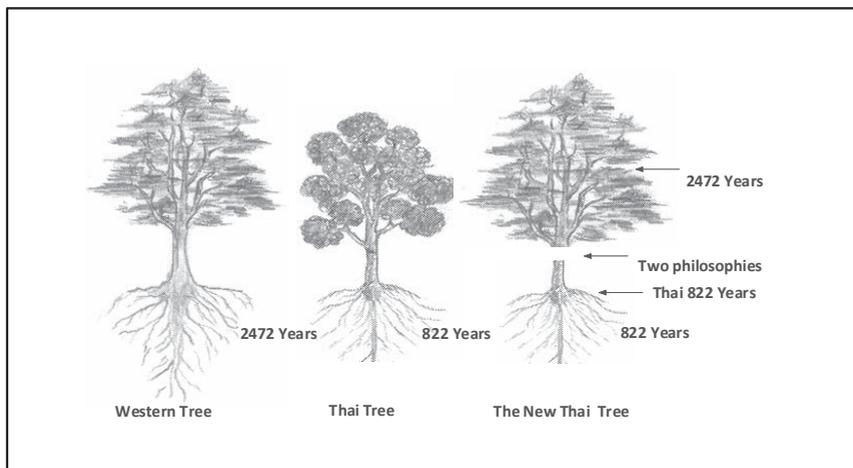
**Thai Societal and Workplace Values**

Almost all Thai scholars, represented by the following, recognise the role of values and religion in all aspects of life (Burnard & Naiyapatana, 2004; Hughes, 1984; Knutson, Komolsevin, Chatiket, & Smith, 2003; Komin, 1990; Koonmee, Singhapakd, Virakul, & Lee, 2010; Niffenegger et al., 2006; Pruetipibultham, 2010; Singhapakdi, Vitell, & Leelakulthanit, 1994). We start with the classical work of Komin (1990) who points out that

“effective organizations or more specifically effective management cannot implement management theories from abroad. Effective leaders can not choose their styles at will” (Komin, 1990, p.703). This is also the position of this article.

Komin’s work throughout is very insightful and it is only possible to note it briefly in this paper. A critical writer who challenged the ability to graft western trees onto Thai roots was Joungtrakul (2009). His position is illustrated in figure 1.

**Figure 1. Joungtrakul’s Three Trees Model**



Joungtrakul (2009) goes on to explain

- in the case where both cultures are consistent, problems may not occur since such cultures are in line and are acceptable to both parties;
- in the case of explicit conflict between the two cultures, the alternatives may be sacrifice by either side or compromise by both parties in order to temporarily avoid the conflicts; and
- in the case where each side insists on maintaining their own culture, severe conflicts may occur.

Encouragingly, Joungtrakul suggests

*a strong impression of Thailand as a country in transition, especially in the area of industrial democracy. There is a sense of movement and this is coming largely, but not only, from the employee*

*group. Employees are moving towards a sense of ownership, a sense of taking part and also a sense that they need more training and education in order to best take advantage of participative opportunities” (Joungtrakul, 2009, p.474)*

This presents an opportunity, in times of transition and change to harness Thai societal values for strategic HRD initiatives in such a way that internal conflict is minimised.

This puts Komin’s (1990) nine value orientations - namely ‘the Ego, Grateful relationship, Smooth interpersonal relationship, Flexibility and adjustment, Religio-psychical orientation, Education and competence, Interdependence, Fun-pleasure and Achievement - in the centre of HRD considerations. Niffenegger et al., (2006) complement Komin’s work and draw specific comparisons between ‘conflicting cultural imperatives’.

**Table 3. Conflicting Cultural Imperatives**

Thai Culture	Western Culture
A tradition of spiritualism as based on Buddhism; to give more than one takes; to resist material attachments.	A need for achievement and material rewards as a sign of success.
A desire to have trust in business relationships, through traditional, social business networks, built over time.	Need for new regulatory procedures and enforcement agencies, with modern and public (transparent) reporting of data.
Need to take care of employees, avoid lay-offs and protect investors from ‘taking a haircut’ (loss), thus suffering a loss of face.	Need to speed up restructuring of insolvent institutions, cutting the high ratio of non-performing loans through implementing modern (chapter 11) bankruptcy laws
Desire to keep the unemployment rate down, by preserving low skilled jobs in labour-intensive export industries.	Need to see rapid progress in the restructuring of insolvent companies, lay-offs, elimination of non-performing loans, greater reliance on high-tech production methods.
Desire for face-to-face business contacts, based on trust and confidentiality	Need to utilize the increased productivity of e-commerce via the Internet, with public display of data.
Encouragement by the king (Rama IX) to be a more self-sufficient country, to produce what one needs, become less dependent on imports.	A desire by Thais to possess western goods as symbols of success and status; a new culture of profligacy among young consumers, students and business people.

(Niffenegger et al., 2006, p.404)

Important in Niffenegger et al's conclusion is the observation that Thailand is similar to other Asian cultures but different from Western cultures and that although many organizations have adopted US business practices, conflicting imperatives still exist.

This point will be taken up again when the CVM is described and modified for the Thai setting. Writing slightly later, in 2007, Curry & Sura address human resource development in Thailand specifically. This is an important work in that it draws attention to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) theories and programs. They also comment on the 'two – Thailand' dichotomy of urban industrialisation and "the rural, agricultural poor in the North, Northeast and Southern parts of the country". Both Curry and Sura (2007) and Pruetipibultham (2010), relate the sufficiency economy principle to HRD in Thailand, and this brief version draws on these accounts.

As Curry and Sura (2007) relate it the sufficiency economy principle is always associated with the work of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and it is administered by the Sufficiency Economy Unit of the National Economic and Social Development Board.

*The concept's two fold theme holds that Thailand should pursue independence in economic sectors where its resource bases and comparative advantages allow and limit, to the extent possible, reliance on the global economy. It also embraces the need for community participation based upon individual freedom so that families without exclusion can be part of community-based, grass roots efforts to improve human skills, strengthen worker attributes and improve both market participation and access...[it provides] a roadmap to national development that is based on grass roots, community based and family involved creation of local institutions that enhance labours ability to contribute to national development. (Curry and Sura, 2007, p. 89)*

Pruetipibultham (2010) writing more recently recounts the concept of sufficiency as promoted by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1974. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej travelled extensively in Thailand and set up study centres in various regions to try to ascertain which strategies would benefit regions and therefore the Thai

economy as a whole. Unlike the pattern of western globalized business development, his view was for a balance, a middle way, that would cushion Thailand from financial crises but at the same time retain the requirements for kindly and gracious human conduct. The sufficiency principle overlies business and organization with overarching Thai values of prudence, strong moral fibre, moderation, graciousness, generosity and self-sacrifice. It adheres especially to the three requirements of moderation, reasonableness and self-immunity or resilience.

### Thai Culture and HRD

What does the sufficiency economy philosophy mean for HRD? Especially in the face of western methods of downsizing? (Feldheim, 2007; Smith, 1990; Zemke, 1990) and restructuring (Ford, 1991; Gauci & McLeod, 1989). One answer is that western methods are themselves being questioned. Writers in the Asia Pacific region (Bhangananda, 2003; Cranley, 2001; Cummings, Hawkins, & Tatto, 2001; Intarakumnerd, 2003,) and Thailand (Cranley, Pinpradit, & Sintoovongse, 2001) have been asking, "What lies beyond materialism"? Another interesting question is "How can Thai business organizations leverage off the Thai value system and at the same time, proceed on its path towards a developing economy"?

The HRD model selected for this paper is the Core Values Method (CVM) (Whiteley & Whiteley, 2007). Placing the CVM in context requires that several interlocking concepts be addressed. These are national culture (in this case Thai), organizational culture and, at a micro level, group and individuals in their organizational settings. Building on several researches and applications of culture and change (Whiteley, 1995; Whiteley & McCabe, 2001; Whiteley & Whiteley, 2007), including in Hong Kong and China (Tang & Whiteley, 1990; Whiteley, Cheung, & Zhang, 2000; Wood, Whiteley, & Zhang, 1999) values were determined as pivotal to an organization's success. As many theorists confirm, national culture, often not discernable to people within an organization, also plays a part in allowing managers and employees to feel comfortable (or not) about accepting western methods of organizing (Blunt, 1988; Brannen, 1991; Denison, Haaland, & Golzer, 2004; Dorfman et al., 1997).

This is especially the case in terms of Thailand where, although employees may not be aware, cultural ties are strong (Karahanna, Evaristo, & Srite 2005; Niffenegger et al., 2006). It is important to note that however appearances support the idea of a universal culture, a view contested by many scholars on globalization (Arrighi, Silver, & Brewer, 2003; Held, 2000; Levy, 1997; Martin, 1998; Stone, Haugerud, & Little, 2000; Wilpert, 2009), organizations operating in a domestic economy need to be aware of and harmonize with the 'emic', that is the insider account of reality (Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999; Pike, 1967). Falk, (2010) imparts a sense of the depth of Thai/Buddhist practices, when she describes where people turned to after the 2004 Tsunami in Southern Thailand. Their strong Buddhist faith offered an explanation of life and death. It allowed them to face the death of loved ones, the destruction of their homes, boats and means of livelihood. Buddhism offers a spiritual element to life such that "communicating across the boundary of living and dead became the most important ritual among the surviving relatives" (Falk, 2010, p.96).

*In an organizational setting, national culture is not the only type of culture that influences managerial and work behavior: Rather, behavior is influenced by different levels of culture ranging from the supranational (regional, ethnic, religious, linguistic) level through the national, professional, and organizational levels to the group level* (Karahanna et al., 2005, p.1).

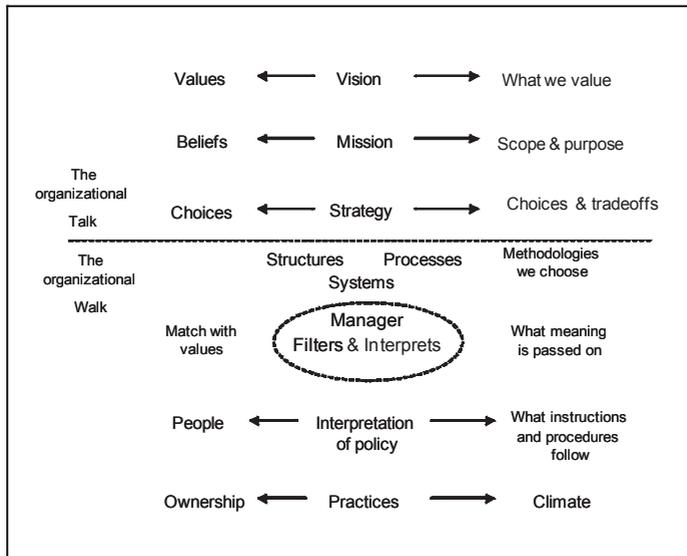
## The Core Values Method – An Overview

Most organizations, large or small, will implicitly or explicitly engage in values work (Cranley, 2001; Cummings, Hawkins, & Tatto, 2001; Sherwood, 2007; Stone, Stone-Romero, & Lukaszewski, 2007). Some adopt participative and comprehensive ways of incorporating values into a vision statement. The core values method described here adopts the participative approach, expanding the activities to enfold values into daily practices.

The core values method which follows is a practical method for building or renewing culture in an organization. An important task for the CVM is to operationalize values in such a way that they will be embedded in daily activities. It is built on the philosophy that every person, every human resource in an organization, is able to construct a personal reality of the organization to whose success he or she contributes. There are some values which rest at the very core of the organization's being. These can be called the *core values*. There are some values within this core value framework which are *key values* in the sense that they are owned by groups in functions and departments but they must harmonise with the overarching core values. Both sets of values need to be taken into account when negotiating a shared reality of what the organization should be doing, why and how it should be doing it.

The method operates in an organization becoming part of the flow of concepts and activities that interact, both formally and informally, across every organization. The schema in figure 2 has been produced to illustrate the flow of activities as they are continuously negotiated in an organization during the working day.

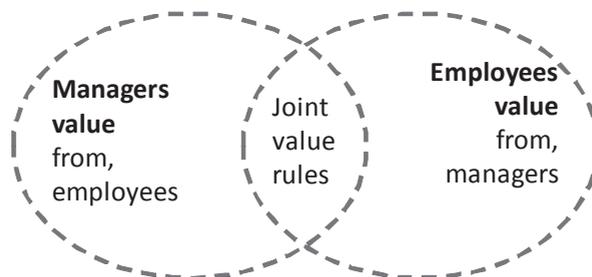
**Figure 2. Flow of organizational activities: the ‘talk and the ‘walk’**



There are some areas where values become interpreted and drawn upon at the grass roots level. Importantly, the manager, operating on the interface acts as a filter and interpreter. An important criterion for the success of the CVM in helping build and bind culture is employee participation and involvement and the CVM provides a framework for building culture so that major stake hold-

ing groups are represented. The two internal groups are managers and employees. In figure 3 the contribution from each group is a statement of the core values behaviors expected of the other group. These can be translated into sets of ‘value-rules’ which are negotiated and shared rather than imposed and followed.

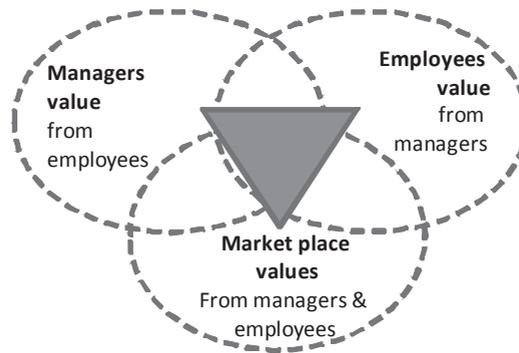
**Figure 3. Internal shared values (the way we do things here).**



Negotiating the core values within the organization is not enough. Each organization does not exist in a vacuum. At the end of the day, there are markets, customers and consumers to serve. This can be taken as the market core value and is an essential part of culture-building. The business

of aligning the three sets of core values shown in figure 4 becomes the major pre-occupation of senior managers and HRD managers when engaged in the task of culture-building and aligning human resource development with the three sets of core values.

**Figure 4. Incorporating market values**



The core values method that follows will first be described as it is practiced. The core values process reflects a flow of activities that cascade throughout an organization. The process begins with some recognition of the need for deep change in the organization. A senior management group will have the big picture of what is happening and will be in a good position to lead the way in gen-

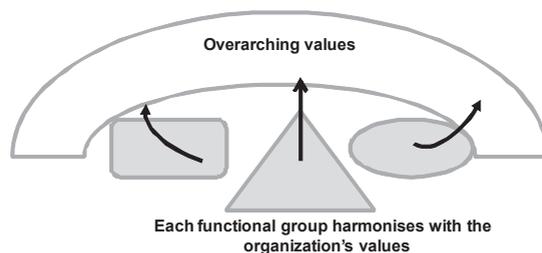
erating values that can, tentatively at this stage, stand for the organization’s overarching values. This group can lead the next level of managers into generating their core values for their domains. In table four we illustrate the essential workshop process which leads to the organizational statement of *Vision*, followed by practical consequences and implementation for work design.

**Table 4. Generic Steps in the CVM**

ACTIVITY	OUTCOME
1. Management core values workshops	Management core values
2. Employee groups core values workshops	Employee core values
3. Marketplace(s) core values workshops + customer surveys	Customer core values
↓ VISION	→ Vision (Philosophy) statement
4. Strategic planning workshops + communication / involvement from employee & customer groups	→ Mission strategic choices
5. Review Structures and systems (social and technical) to match the vision and mission	→ Work redesign
6. Departmental vision of organisational arrangements	→ Group goals
7. Information and communication system	→ Feedback

The method needs to be replicated in a transparent way until all groups have had some participation in and ownership of their values. As this is happening a matching exercise is carried out to make sure that the values of groups from various contexts within the organization harmonize with

the organization’s overarching values. This is illustrated in figure 5. The CVM involves gradually identifies the core values of managers, employees and customers for each organizational context. The core values are the raw material for the organization’s vision statement.

**Figure 5 Harmonising the values**

The second, important stage of the core values method is the translation of core values into two areas. One is structures, systems and processes. The other is the translation of values into actual behaviors. By doing this they play an integral part in the daily life of the organization. The translation is very easy to do and both managers and employees can very quickly identify behaviors that are negative and positive in terms of the core values. We go on now to expand on the core values method.

## Steps in the Core Values Method

### Step one

The CVM starts with a very simple question asked of each manager in a manager's workshop meeting.

"What do you value most of all from employees?"

The question will generate a list of values such as the list in table 5 which was generated from a private sector transport organisation. Of course the comments do not emerge as a neat list. In workshop mode there are many conversations and comments, somewhat resembling those below.

**Table 5. Extract from individual managers' core values list**

*Give us the right sort of information to make decisions1*  
*Do not confront2*  
*Mutual Trust*  
*Give me autonomy3*  
*Keep within budget*

### *Willing to learn*

#### **Comments:**

<sup>1</sup> *Too much technical information I think you probably, if I was planning, it probably may have come from the maintenance area more than us, so yeah, we've got a planning department which gives us the plan and I sort of look at it and it's a fine line. Either we're not getting enough information, they don't tell us nothing, or they we're getting too much, too much and some of it is not relevant, and two, you're bombarded with too much info and I think it affects different people in different ways*

<sup>2</sup> *Confrontation isn't good for relationships we haven't a big confrontation problem here no, not really, I can't even think of any instances, slight disagreements. I guess people just talking working a way forward one way or another, I suppose if one guy wants to do something or is doing it one way well the other guy can go and do something else or go and do his other work, because we're pretty scarce on the ground it's not like we get to work together a lot anyway.*

<sup>3</sup> *We want to be given like autonomy or a free rein to make your own decisions and I have a great deal of satisfaction with that type of approach. I feel, it makes you want to do your best for the company. You can make the decisions and things like that, I don't know how to explain it...you feel more a part of the company in a team building sort of structure.*

### **Step two**

From step two and all the way through the core values workshops, the HRD facilitator will use the data generated from group members. The full

list of values will contain duplicates. Although it is very much more efficient for the HRD manager him or herself to identify duplicates, this must be resisted. As the process goes on there should be exhaustive discussion and clarification, usually in small sub-groups who each present their values for more discussion until duplicates have been taken out and a core list remains.

### Step three

This is the values test. Again there are two reasons for this activity. One is to make sure that operational or strategic items are not presented as values. The other is to continue to develop ownership within the group.

The objective of the 'values test' is to differentiate in participants' minds values from strategies and other operational issues. Values, it is explained, describe "what we stand for, what we believe in how we do things around here". The values test comes in the form of a scenario and the one below has been tried and tested, but in practice the details will be relevant to the particular organization doing the CVM work.

Scenario: Imagine the organization is going through very hard times. There are problems with suppliers, competition in the marketplace, and impending dangers which might result in restructuring and possible downsizing.

Each item on the values list is then set to the values test. Given all that is befalling the organization, would this (item) still stand? The answer must be yes or no. The logic of the test is that even when the going is tough, the market is against you and negative things are happening, you would still hold this as a value. Group members will then identify items that are really operational (tasks we have to do) or strategic (what our long term goals are). Apart from discriminating between values, strategies and operational tasks, it continues the process of ownership.

### Step four

Now the list has no duplicates in it and each item has passed the 'values test'. The question is "which value will be chosen to represent the list as a core value? This step is gruelling and, especially in the Thai environment where argument and discussion need to be handled very constructively, discussion

and 'argument' need to happen. It is this process which helps the values to become 'owned' even when individuals prefer other values at the core. It is also the step which needs most time because even when managers and employees may not prefer the same choice for a core value, they are asked to 'own' the process.

### Step five

The last activity is to choose from the remaining list of values, the three core values that can express what the organization stands for. This activity needs to happen for each group and again the process of encouraging discussion and debate is continued.

### Step six

At this point management, employee and customer groups have been working independently. The task now is to meld the core values into a vision statement and this activity is usually performed by senior managers. The task given is to work with the list of core values generated from within the organization and the customer group and fashion it into a vision statement, for example

"We value building committed teams and high trust environments for customers who want the human touch"

### Step seven

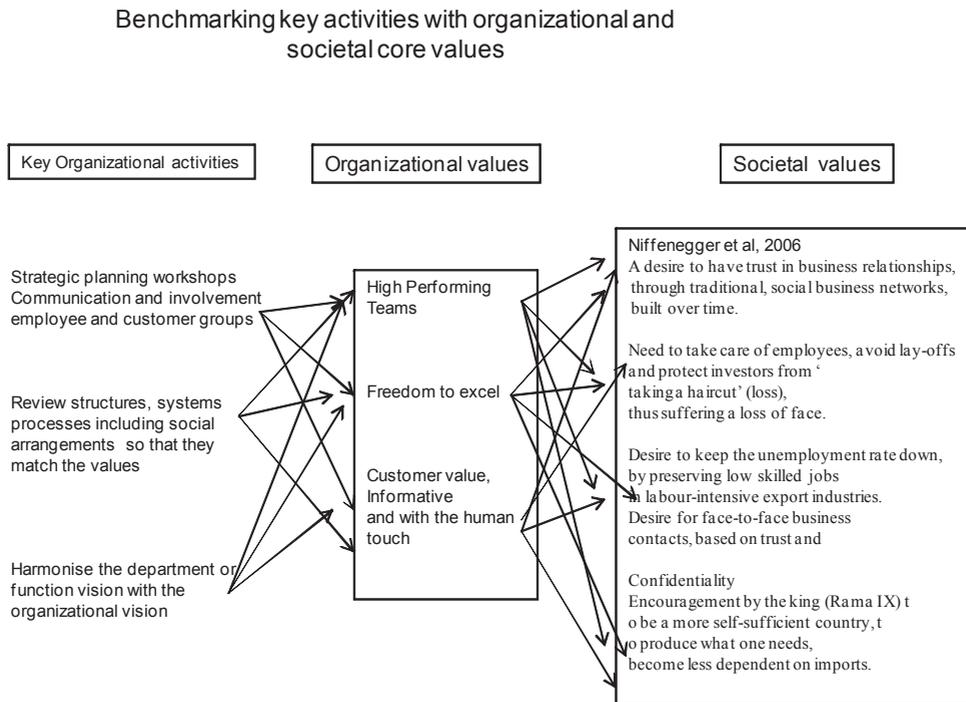
This activity is what differentiates the 'one time' values initiative from the 'enfolded' one. This process might sound so normal but it was added to the core values method because of reports and personal experience of (even senior managers) having to be reminded of the vision several months (in some cases several weeks) after values generation. Values need to feature in competencies and performance indicators. Therefore they need to be expressed in terms of behaviors as we see in table four behaviours for *Committed Teams*.

**Table 6. Behaviours generated from a specific group**

Negative behaviours	Positive
Teams with no learners Teams who argue amongst themselves Superstars Teams who score in their own goal rather than cooperate Teams who are committed to the long weekend above our needs	Teams who run with the organizational goals as theirs Teams who pull together Teams who are not afraid to question themselves Teams who will adapt to our new challenges Teams who recognise that the chain is as strong as its weakest link and nurture that link

A second and important part of the method is benchmarking. Figure six shows how the CVM is used to benchmark organizational activities with organization and societal values.

**Figure 6. Benchmarking core values**



**Thai and organizational values enfolded in daily activities**

Writers on Thai values agree that the culture is relational in nature. Not only is it relational but there are symbols and nuances that both enable and impede the more impersonal and rational/economic needs of organization. The CVM has to fit in with the desired conduct and qualities of the sufficiency economy principle, incorporating

moderation, reasonableness, prudence and moral fibre. These must be combined with the broader Thai values espoused by Komin (1990).

In table 7 column one in represents the epistemic lens through which activities within an organization need to be viewed. By ‘epistemic lens’ we mean the prism through which encultured knowledge and experiences are viewed.

**Table 7 Epistemic lens applied to organizational activities**

Epistemic Lens	Meetings	Tasks	Giving criticism	Taking criticism	Creative activity	Performance reporting	Strategic Planning
SE * moderation moral flexible reasonable	✓					✓	✓
Ego Orientation **	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grateful relationship			✓	✓		✓	
Smooth Interpersonal Flexibility adjustment	✓		✓	✓			
religio- psychical	✓	✓			✓		✓
education and competence	✓	✓			✓		✓
Inter dependent					✓		
fun pleasure	✓	✓					
Achievement task	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trust/freedom/ Human touch***							

\* Sufficiency economy (Curry and Sura, 2007).

\*\* Thai value clusters (Komin, 1990)

\*\*\* Organizational core values of employees, managers, and customers. (Whiteley & Whiteley, 2007).

Valued knowledge comes from Thai values and organizational values. Thus you will find the ‘Sufficiency Economy’ principles (SE); Komin’s (1990) cluster of nine Thai values; and the core values of each individual organization derived from the CVM exercise within the organization. The seven columns across identify common activities within every organization. The relevance of core values, Thai values and the SE principles are indicated by ticks (✓). The matrix can be used in a simple way as below or used in a more sophisticated way to deal with single elements of the epistemic lens which need more attention or are causing more difficulty.

**Conclusion**

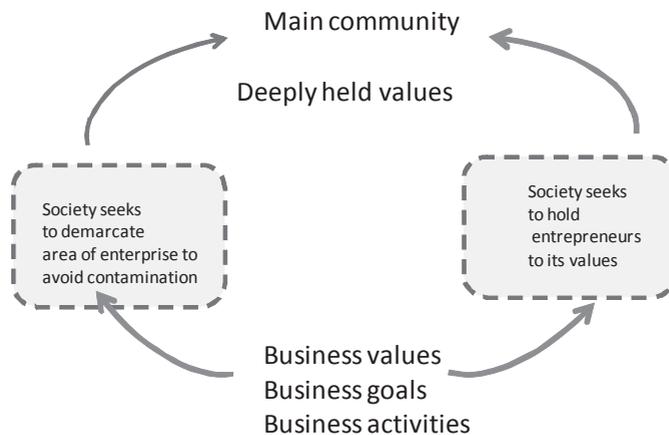
What Thai organizations are facing is what Hendry (2004) calls a bi-moral situation. Traditional societal values of caring, compassion, self-sacrifice and ‘merit –making’ -‘the notion of doing good, in order to help redress the balance of one’s own Karma or to help the positive balance of Karma for another person” (Burnard & Naiyapatana, 2004, p. 759) must compete with entrepreneurial self interest that characterises contemporary business. The growth of economic domination by western organizations contains the seeds of inequality and exploitation (Velasquez, 1998) but here in Thailand organizations have a decided advantage which resides in the strong moral values demanded of

people at all levels of organization.

What remains is the need for practical methods of achieving the concomitant interdependence of societal and organizational values. The core values method is designed to generate the shared core values of managers, employees and customers. These need to harmonise with the values of Thai society and especially those within the sufficiency economy principle. They also need to pay allegiance to the broader societal values emerged by Komin (1990). As suggested in the matrix in

table 7 some activities demand allegiance across all values. Although all should be borne in mind, some activities such as tasks or creative activity bring education and competence to the fore whilst others like giving and taking criticism rely heavily on 'gracious' qualities. Thailand is well placed to lead the way in advancing the cause of human resource development in a 'human' way. We conclude with figure 7 which presents an interesting framework within which the CVM could succeed.

**Figure 7. Business values bounded by societal values** (Adapted from Hendry 2004, p.52)



For many critical writers, beginning with Durkheim the risk of entrepreneurial self interest was a contaminating influence (Hendry, 2004). These concerns have intensified as globalisation overwhelms local economies. The double effect of

the sufficiency economy and Thai societal values is, to date, one of the most powerful antidotes to what some see as the more pernicious effects of globalisation itself.

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