A Phenomenological Exploration of Intercultural Leadership Experienced by Chinese Expatriates in Thailand

■ Qin Yi

Abstract. *The emergence of the stateless corporation and the increasingly interdependencies among the world's economies mean that leaders today are constantly exposed to different cultures with different lifestyles. This has resulted in the recognition of different management and leadership practices and a growing understanding of the importance of intercultural leadership. This study focused its attention on the essential meanings of intercultural leadership experiences through the perspective of Chinese expatriate leaders in Thailand. In investigating the essence of the lived experience, a qualitative research strategy was employed, based on the philosophical underpinnings and methods of phenomenology. The results are systematically organized into nine themes which are classified into three categories: response to a new environment, nature of intercultural interaction, and learning to lead. The study contributes to help create a better understanding of intercultural leadership which may help global organizations that utilize international assignments, as well as the organizations, educational institutions, and HRD professionals who are responsible for career planning programs. It also provides perspectives for actual or potential expatriates to consider.*

Keywords: Phenomenological Exploration, Intercultural Leadership, Chinese expatriates

Introduction

In the past few decades, the economic growth and development of East Asian economies are recorded as the fastest in history. The economic achievements of the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines are significant and remarkable (Redding, 1990). As the world economy continues to globalize, and the workforce moves across national boundaries, cultural diversity has become a substantial challenge which businesses need to "understand howenterprises are managed across diverse cultures; they must be aware that because of cultural differences, the managerial style that works in one society often does not work well in others" (Rodrigues, 1998, p.29).

Among the wide variety of definitions of leadership in the literature, the common trends are that leadership is a process which involves influence, occurs within the context of an individual or group, and involves goal attainment which forms the core of the definition (Yukl, 2002; Northouse, 2004). Differences in a foreign environment make leading and influencing people in a multicultural operation much more complex and challenging than in the domestic operation. Fatehi (1996) argued that what constitutes a good leader in one culture may not constitute a good leader in other cultures. In order to achieve effective leadership in another culture, a leader must understand the social values, customs, norms, leadership behavior and work-related cultural values of the host country's workforce (Trompenaars, 1993; Fatehi, 1996), as well as having their own cultural values which influence greatly their leadership styles.

The study of leadership is based on the axiological assumption that a leader's behavior is value-laden, so reviewing and understanding the dimensions of national cultural values could be the best way for intercultural leaders to understand cultural differences which are particularly helpful in ensuing culturally-based business practice, and lead an organization to operate effectively.

For instance, Bass (1990, p. 761) claimed that "more often than not, national boundaries do make a considerable difference in managers' goals, preferences for taking risks, pragmatism, interpersonal competence, effective intelligence, emotional stability, and leadership style".

There are multiple ways to identify how culture influences leadership practice. First of all, culture shapes the image of the ideal of a particular country or organization. Cultural groups vary in their conceptions of what is important for effective and efficient leadership (House *et al.*, 1997). Moreover, culture has an effect on the personality traits and work values of leaders and followers. Personality appears as the outcome of a lifelong process of interaction between individuals towards their environment,resulting in systematic differences in the person-typical behavior of people who grow up in different cultures (Berry *et al.*, 2002). Additionally, culture determines the actual pattern of leadership behaviors. Leaders are cultural agents who bring values to bear on decision-making and policy decisions (Leithwood *et al.*, 1999). They are both the inheritors of established traditions and the transmitters of core values within nations, societies, and organizations. Cultural values and norms are likely to influence the attitudes and behaviors of leaders in ways unconscious to them (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004). Finally, cultural values reflect societal norms in the relationships between individuals. These norms specify acceptable forms of leadership behaviors.

Although China and Thailand have some close similarities in culture, there still exist some significant differences between the two countries. Like some other countries in Southeast Asia, Thai culture is founded on Buddhism and tradition. Buddhism exerts a strong influence on the way of life of the Thai people. It has supplied cognitive and evaluative elements that have been incorporated into Thai culture and built into the Thai social structure. Consequently, the behavior and attitude of most Thais follow the life cycle stages that are part of Buddhist rites and rituals (Podhisita, 1998). Podhisita (1998) identified 5 sets of relationships between Bhuddhism and the Thai worldview: *the world of hierarchy, the world of merit and demerit, the world of 'Bun Khun', the world of the 'cool heart', and the world of individualism*. Based on her empirical study, Suntaree Komin (1991) described nine Thai national value clusters in her book: *Psychology of the Thai people: Values and behavioral patterns*. The nine value clusters represent the dimensions of Thai culture, whereby the individual and national characteristics can be meaningfully described. The nine Thai value clusters are: (1) Ego Orientation, (2) Grateful Relationship Orientation, (3) Smooth Interpersonal Relationship Orientation, (4) Flexibility and Adjustment Orientation, (5) Religio-Psychical Orientation, (6) Education and Competence Orientation, (7) Interdependence Orientation, (8) Fun-Pleasure Orientation, and (9) Achievement-Task Orientation.

The Chinese culture which has evolved for more than 2,500 years was initially influenced by three molding forces: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. A notable difference among these three molding forces is that Confucianism is humanistic; Taoism is naturalistic, while Buddhism is spiritualistic. These three schools of thought complement instead of contradict each other, and the teachings of Taoism and Buddhism were assimilated into Confucianism during the 11th century to constitute Neo-Confucianism or Post-Confucianism, which has made the Chinese way of life intensely practical and philosophical. According to Sheh (2002), the study of Chinese values can be briefly categorized into four classes: (1) Social Structure, (2) Familism, (3) Inter-personal Relationship and (4) Basic Assumption.

Chinese cultural values have been seen as an important factor in determining and shaping Chinese leadership practice. Within Chinese culture, there exists a well-developed and culturally legitimized traditional and classical literature related to principles and strategies for leadership practice, involving *The Art of War* by Sun Tsu, *The Three Kingdoms* by Lo Kuan-chung, *The Thirty-Six Strategies*, and the *Book of Change*s by Lao Tsu. Besides these traditional works, more modern literature also provides significant background and support to the contribution of traditional Chinese philosophy and Chinese cultural values in relation to Chinese managerial and leadership practice, such as the works of Bond & Hwang (1986), Lockett (1988), Redding (1980; 1982; 1990), Silin (1976), Tan (1990), Tan Hock (1989), Baird, Lyles, and Wharton (1990), Wang (1992), and Fan Xing (1995). This literature is related both to joint venture management and Chinese cross-cultural issues in general.

The implication of Chinese cultural values on managerial practices is so significant that it has created the distinguishing characteristics of the Chinese managerial system, involving: highly centralized

decision-making, low structuring of activities, a paternalistic style of leadership, strong emphasis on collectivism and group behavior, and high managerial and ownership control (Limlingan, 1986; Redding, 1982).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the essential structural themes of the intercultural leadership experiences of Chinese expatriate leaders working in Thailand.

The researcher reached this objective by: (a) exploring the perceptions of intercultural leadership experienced by Chinese expatriates in Thailand through qualitative inquiry; (b) describing the underlying themes and contexts that account for the perception of intercultural leadership experienced by Chinese expatriates; (c) examining the universal structures which bring about the Chinese expatriates' feelings and thoughts on intercultural leadership in Thailand; and (d) describing the invariant structural themes and essence of experiencing intercultural leadership by Chinese expatriates in Thailand.

Research Design

This study considered the research question, "What is the experience of intercultural leadership like for Chinese expatriate leaders working in Thailand?". In discovering the essence of the lived experience, a qualitative research strategy was employed, based on the philosophical underpinnings and methods of phenomenology.

Phenomenology, as an inductive descriptive research approach, has been increasingly used in social science research (Morse, 1994). The phenomenological research methodology, whose concern is to shed light upon the meanings of human experience, is particularly suitable for exploring the "lived

experiences" (van Manen, 1990), could be used effectively to explore a range of human experiences within management (Ehrich, 2005), and has a direct application and contribution to HRD (Gibson & Hanes, 2003). According to Streubert and Carpenter (1999, p. 56), topics "appropriate to phenomenological research method include those central to humans' life experiences". Intercultural communication, intercultural leadership concept, and practice are subjects that are central to the human life experiences of those Chinese expatriate leaders.

In this study, a criterion sample (Creswell, 1998) of 10 Chinese expatriate leaders having intercultural leadership experiences who were working in Thailand were recruited as the potential co-researchers. The criteria for inclusion in this study were the participants who: 1. are Chinese expatriate leaders; 2. working in an organizational context in Thailand; 3. having at least 2 years intercultural leadership experiences in Thailand; 4. are either male or female; and 5. demonstrate a willingness to meet with the researcher and participate in this study. The researcher identified the potential co-researchers by asking the keyparticipants and friends who had exposure to the Chinese expatriate leaders who fitted the sample criteria. The key participants were the people who functioned in roles that would have contact with the Chinese expatriate leaders, such as the president of Chinese chamber of commerce or the regional chamber of commerce in Thailand; or others in organizations and could make useful recommendations. When the name of a possible co-researcher was provided, the researcher probed to understand the reasons which supported their recommendation for confirmation of the potential co-researcher. The researcher attempted to ensure that these potential co-researchers did meet the sample criteria of this research.

After identifying potential co-researchers, the researcher initiated contact with each co-researcher by email and phone call to assess their interest and eventual participation in this research. After the initial contact with each potential co-researcher, the researcher also explained the following steps that involved understanding and signing the *Consent Form* and then a face-to-face conversation for approximately two to three hours with audio taping. The researcher remained flexible in the selection of a location for the interview, as long as it was a mutually agreeable and quiet place. The sites for interviewing the co-researchers included their offices, conference rooms, and their homes.

The co-researchers were a very diverse group. The co-researchers' profile information is summarized in the Table below.

Table: Co-researchers' Profile

Identification	Position	Age	Gender	Martial Status	Education	Type of institution
A	Branch Executive Vice President	Mid-30s	Male	Divorced	Master's	Production and processing industry
B	General Managing Director	Early-30s	Male	Single	Master's	Trade industry
C	Chief Executive	Mid-40s	Male	Married with children	Bachelor	Service industry
D	Chief Executive	40s	Female	Divorced	Bachelor	Production and processing industry
E	Chairman	Over 60	Male	Married with stepchildren	Bachelor	Manufacturing industry
F	President	40s	Male	Single	Master's	Trade industry
G	President	Mid-50s	Male	Married with children	Junior college	Trade industry
H	Branch Vice President	Early-40s	Male	Married	Junior college	Production and processing industry
I	Vice President	Late-40s	Male	Divorced and remarried	Bachelor	Trade industry
J	Chairman	Early-40s	Male	Married with children	Bachelor	Manufacturing industry

In this phenomenological study, the researcher employed an in-depth, open-ended conversational interviewing style to explore the Chinese expatriate leaders' experiences about intercultural leadership practice. Unlike the scientific methods which ensure objectivity in order not to influence the research findings, phenomenological research views the meanings of their responses to questions as being co-created by researchers and those who experience the events or lived phenomena is being investigated (Becker, 1992). Thus, the subject in phenomenological research is called a 'co-researcher'.

From a phenomenological point-of-view, the researcher must keep reminding him/herself that "phenomenological research, in all its stages, is to be constantly mindful of one's original question and thus to be steadfastly oriented to the lived experience that makes it possible to ask the 'what it is like' question in the first place" (van Manen, 1990, p.42). Trying to be as non-directive as possible, the researcher asked co-researchers to describe their experiences without directing or suggesting their description in any way. The researcher used an Interview Guide which included a series of interview questions aimed to evoking a comprehensive account of the co-researchers' experience. Meanwhile, the researcher employed probes, "a day in the life" approach, and stories and metaphors to encourage co-researchers to give a full description of their experiences, including their thoughts, feelings, images, sensations, and memories, along with a description of the situation in which the experiences occurred during interviewing. The researcher also constructed an Interview Protocol Sheet to follow before, during and after each interview. Memoing was another important data source in qualitative research that the researcher used in this present study. During each interview, the researcher took interview notes, which included the personal thoughts, feelings, the words or

phrases to help further dig the co-researcher's story, any non-verbal actions or facial features that add understanding about the phenomenon. The researcher audio recorded all interviews by using two tape recorders with the permission of participants. Each interview and co-researcher was assigned a code by an alphabet character to protect their identities in all written reports.

Data Analysis

According to Polkinghorne (1989), there are different ways to conduct the analysis of the descriptions in phenomenological research, such as the analyzing steps from Van Kaam, Colaizzi and Giorgi. Giorgi's (1985; 1989; 1997; 2002) psychological approach to phenomenological research focuses on individual experience and assumes that there is an essential structure to the phenomenon and that

a person has intentional behavior and free will. The researcher conducted theme analysis of the interview transcripts by using Giorgi's (1989) six specific stages of data analysis: (1) Gaining a sense of the whole; (2) Discriminating different meaning units; (3) Summarizing meaning units; (4), Transformation of meaning units; (5) Situated and general structure statement; and (6) Extrapolate the essence of the phenomenon.

The first stage in data analysis was to gain a sense of the whole by reading the entire description multiple times until the researcher understood the language of the co-researchers and was deeply immersed in the contexts. Then, the researcher examined each transcript for potential themes and "meaning units" in order to understand the nature of the co-researcher's experience and to look for the essence of the experience. Three major dimensions of intercultural leadership were identified:emotional, transitional & developmental, and behavioral & influential. Then the researcher sought to identify significant statements/quotes to illustrate these meaning units: e.g., emotional, "*I always had an intensive feeling of depending on others for living which I cannot erase from my mind…*"; transitional & developmental, "*In fact, my life lies in the process of failure and success*", "*I changed my character a lot, especially in patience…*"; behavioral & influential, "*We treat them well, and so do they treat us*", "*We never delay their salary till the first day of next month. It doesn't matter to us to pay several days earlier or later. But it is really vital to employees to pay for their rent, bank loan and credit cards…*"

When the whole text or description was divided into different meaning units, the researcher analyzed each of these manageable units. The next step was to clarify, elaborate and summarize the meaning units by relating constituents to each other and to the whole. The researcher reflected on how the highlighted portions fitted together or collapsed into each other. The fourth stage was to state the meaning that dominated each meaning unit by transforming from the co-researcher's words to the researcher's own words. Then, the researcher classified each meaning unit in terms of the topic being researched by rewriting it into a more psychological language. This stage also involved the processes of "reflection" and "imaginative variation". Imaginative variation required the researcher to consider and reflect on all possible meanings, not just accepting the first meaning that emerged from the data. By using imaginative variation, the researcher began to both follow the co-researchers' concrete experience and reflect about the different possibilities of their meaning.

In order to make a final consistent description of the psychological structure of the phenomenon under study, the researcher made a general structure statement. Then, the researcher synthesized and integrated the insights made by the co-researcher about the transformed meaning units, and made an effort to universalize the findings of the research by focusing on the essential aspects and characteristics of the studied phenomenon.

Methods of Trustworthiness

In phenomenological research, the researcher needs to control bias, which might occur during the research process in order to establish the trustworthiness of the findings. Trustworthiness of data and interpretation in this study involved two parts: credibility and transferability. In this present study, the researcher shared the collected data and the preliminary interpretations with peer debriefing. Besides
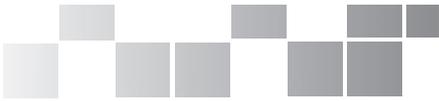
peer debriefing, the co-researchers were integrally involved in the process of research. The data analysis, interpretations, and finding were created by following the descriptions of the co-researchers. Thus, the researcher went back to the co-researchers for their acknowledgement and comments during the process of transcription, data analysis, and revealing findings. Additionally, "triangulation", which involves using information from different sources for interpretation, is another technique to obtain credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Besides in-depth, open-ended interviews, memos and documents were further information sources in this research. Finally, Brislin's (   ) seven-step translation approach was utilized for ensuring the accuracy of translation to English from Chinese, which was the interviewing language.

Transferability, which is a technique necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion in a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To insure transferability, the researcher provides a "thick description", which presents details, context, emotional and social relationship descriptions for evoking emotionality and self-feelings (Denzin, 1989).

Findings and Discussion

The findings of the content analysis were systematically organized into nine themes: (1) awareness as being different; (2) collaboration with others; (3) self-discovering; (4) continuous learning; (5) growth/development; (6) adjustment; learning how to lead; (7) selecting and developing employees; (8) communicating actively and effectively; and (9) motivating and leading. While each of the themes stands on its own, they provide an additional and structured perspective in describing the intercultural leadership experience, when they are looked at in total.

Nine major resulting themes resulted in the following summarized composite description of the phenomenon of this research:

1. Awareness as being Different: This theme described the experiences of Chinese expatriate leadership as a time when co-researchers reflected on how they sounded, appeared, acted, and were treated differently from locals in the foreign environment. The co-researchers in this research experienced an awareness of being different to their new environments: they felt discomfort, frustration and separation when being treated differently in comparison with the local country nationals, or being confronted by personal danger and peril; in the meanwhile, the co-researchers felt a sense of superiority with respect to the advantages of the development of Chinese technology and the products they were based on.

2. Collaboration with Others: This theme described that all the co-researchers could ultimately find their own ways to fit in the foreign work and social environment by collaboration with others. The Chinese expatriate leaders responded to the importance of social support and social network in the foreign country, as well as to the need for collaboration with fellow expatriates, non-fellow expatriates and host country nationals. The seeking of a social network and willingness to turn competition into collaboration were the co-researchers' responses to the new environment.

3. Self-discovery: This theme explored the meanings of the expatriate leadership experience to be a time of great self-discovery for the Chinese expatriate leaders, who increased their clarity of their own cultural values and their recognition of the influence of their own cultural background in the new environment.

4. Continuous Learning: Chinese expatriate leaders found their intercultural leadership to be meaningful, because they learned so much about themselves, a foreign culture, and doing business in a new cultural setting, which is regarded as a continuous process.

5. Growth/Development: The Chinese expatriate leaders saw their intercultural experiences as positive and rewarding with both personal and professional growth and development. To the co-researchers in this research, their expatriate assignments were rich experiences, full of insights about themselves, their personal strengths, growth opportunities, as well as reflecting on their own culture. They shared that the intercultural leadership experience allowed them to increase their tolerance and acceptance of differences by exploring personal traits and developing confidence and was significantly life changing.

6. Adjustment: The nature of intercultural leadership experience was described by the Chinese expatriates in this research as the openness and adjustment to differences. They learned that even the smallest differences were cultural. The co-researchers identified that being generous and being patient were critical during the process of successful adjustment in the new cultural environment.

7. Selecting and Developing an Employee: This theme identified that learning how to utilize and develop host country employees are critical for intercultural leadership practice. The co-researchers had a strong commitment to the development and enhancement of the employees' growth and learning to enhance their performance.

8. Communicating Actively and Effectively: This theme described that active and effective communication between local employees and expatriate leaders was regarded as an important facilitating factor for expatriate success. In order to communicate actively and effectively with local employees, the co-researchers expressed the importance of understanding Thai cultural values and beliefs. Language ability was regarded as critical in the intercultural interactions.

9. Motivating and Leading: This theme identified that all the Chinese expatriate leaders made great efforts to be influential expatriate leaders in a foreign country. Having authentic consideration, intelligent vision, and moral examples were imperative for successful intercultural leadership.
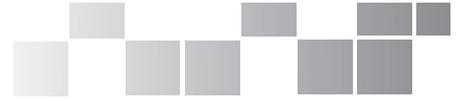
Implications

1. Implications for Theory

This phenomenological exploration of intercultural leadership generated rich and essential meanings of Chinese expatriate experiences. Based on the emergent essential themes derived from the co-researchers' perceptions and lived experiences, the researcher will present the implications for theory. On the whole, the findings from this research contribute to closing the research void of examining the intercultural leadership from the Chinese expatriate leaders' perspective. By exploring the intercultural leadership of Chinese expatriates through their personal narratives, the researcher was allowed a glimpse of how these Chinese expatriates perceive and describe their intercultural leadership. In particular, the findings from this research provide insight to the knowledge area of intercultural leadership development, bringing to light some implications of collaboration and adjustment to host foreign culture upon the management experience.

Concerning the impact of collaboration with fellow and/or host country nationals, some researchers (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004; Furnham & Bochner, 1986) emphasized the benefits of collaboration with host country nationals more than with fellows. However, to the Chinese expatriate leaders in this research, besides admitting the importance of social network coming from host country nationals, the collaboration and contact with fellow expatriates seemed to have great benefit. The co-researchers found that it is often helpful to discuss business topics with fellow expatriates from a similar background who can closely relate with them and with these situations and carefully pitch in with experience-based ideas.

With regard to adjustment to the host culture, Bandura (1977) favors the "social learning perspective" in explaining the intercultural adjustment. The Chinese expatriate leaders in this research perceived the adjustment experiences by means of social learning as the nature of intercultural interaction, which is in line with the Bandura's (1977) perspective. They learned to adjust to the host culture by observing effective leaders' strategies. The Chinese expatriate leaders also identified that, besides social learning, they all experienced self-discovery, growing and developing when adjusting to the host foreign culture. They described that they learned more about themselves, their cultural values, personal strengths, as well as growth opportunities through intercultural interaction. The co-researchers regarded their expatriate experiences as positive and rewarding for both their personal and professional growth. They shared that the intercultural interaction allowed them to increase their tolerance and acceptance of differences by exploring personal traits and developing confidence which was a significant life changing experience.

This present research also suggests a number of possible implications of practice for global organizations that utilize international assignments, as well as the organizations, educational

institutions, and HRD professionals who are responsible for career planning programs. It also provides perspectives for potential expatriates to consider before leaving for an overseas assignment.

2. Implications for Global Organizations: The first issue for global organizations would be to select candidates who are sensitive, flexible to a new environment and have good interpersonal relationships in the expatriate management cycle that leads to successful assignments. The candidates should master the abilities to communicate verbally and nonverbally, to inspire trust and confidence, and to view problem solving as a social process involving consensus and interpersonal influences rather than just finding

correct answers. In addition, the candidates should master language skills of the host country.

The second issue for global organizations would be training the potential expatriates to be ready to face intercultural differences through an intercultural sensitivity training program, combined with more context-related cultural training, like field experiences, role plays, or other techniques designed to modify thoughts and behaviors in intercultural interaction.

3. Implications for HRD Professionals: Globalization has changed the dynamics of such an adventure for the expatriates, and the dynamics may have changed and will continue to change which require assistance and support for successful transition, professionally and personally, into the foreign culture. In the international arena, expatriation is an important HR practice. In that way, the organizations, educational institutions, and HRD professionals who are responsible for providing career planning programs might need to recognize that changing of expatriation is inevitable and unpredictable events almost always occur. They should consider making a conscious concern and effort to provide individuals with support strategies to cope with uncertainty and help them learn how to adapt, to be sensitive, and be flexible by developing marketable new skills and engaging in continual learning activities which they need to increase their professional expertise.

4. Implications for Potential Expatriates: The Chinese expatriate leaders in this research provided their long-term, first-hand lived experiences of intercultural leadership that may be helpful to those considering such an assignment or experience. Those who are considering such assignments need to have strong self-awareness and self-understanding. In addition, an expatriate needs to be willing and able to learn the host nation's language, culture, customs, working & living style, and other cues related to communication in the new environment. Lastly, the potential expatriates need to be patient and persistent.

Limitations

Generalizability is a limitation of this research. Focusing on the elements of each theme that emerged in this present research may have limited the applicability of the findings to other cultures.

Furthermore, the biases of the researcher may have been a limitation that is taken into consideration. Since all the co-researchers in this study were either friends or acquaintances of the researcher and, thus, were selected through the researcher's contacts, bias may be evident in the participant selection. Additionally, the researcher intended to make the co-researchers to feel comfortable and share their perceptions and lived experiences honestly and comprehensively during the interview phase. When the researcher was not aware of or did not make the perspective explicit, the voices of the co-researchers may not have been heard because of possible bias. There is also a possibility that while analyzing the data, the researcher saw variations in the data due to personal knowledge of the co-researchers. Any interpretation of the data gathered should consider these limitations.

Recommendations for Future Study

1. In this study, the researcher intended to explore the essence of the Chinese expatriates' leadership by seeking comprehensive stories from ten co-researchers in their everyday lived experiences. In order to increase the credibility of this qualitative inquiry, it is recommended that building upon this research by employing field observations would be informative, which would bolster the researcher's effectiveness as the investigative instrument and provide additional data points of triangulation.

2. In this present study, only Chinese expatriates were invited to be co-researchers, while the local subordinates and the local partners were not included in the sample. It is recommended that further research could pay more attention to intercultural leadership interactions by involving others working within the common environments and settings, such as peers, local subordinates and local partners. In that way, the local subordinates' and partners' perspectives may be obtained by analyzing how the locals perceive the leadership of their foreign managers. Besides, in order to deal with the challenges related to data collection and interpretation, future research should be carried out by a bicultural or multicultural research team or involve researchers from all cultures involved.

3. The co-researchers in this research were chosen based on several criteria, such as being Chinese expatriate leaders, having and being willing to share the lived expatriate experience, and working in an organizational context in Thailand. It is recommended that this research be replicated to examine the intercultural expatriate leadership by gender, industries, or professional disciplines to determine if there are any distinguishing experiences pertinent to those specific groups.

4. It would be desirable if further studies could also look at Chinese expatriate managers in Thailand (and/or elsewhere) who have not be successful. It would probably be more difficult to contact or interview such persons, but, at least, a researcher might be able to interview Chinese Head Office HR Managers and other senior managers in China to obtain some idea of why such persons were not successful in expatriate assignments. Of course, there may be a number of reasons why a Chinese expatriate manager might not be successful in a foreign assignment. Some of these reasons may be internal (e.g., the Chinese expatriate manager may not have been able to develop the required cultural awareness), or some might be external, such as experiencing problems associated with a spouse and/or family problems in the foreign environment.

Conclusion

Discussion about intercultural leadership has recently been lively, since the need for managers with international careers is increasing due to the globalization of business. This present study has provided some insights into the understanding of intercultural leadership of Chinese expatriates, as has been perceived and described in this study. The understanding of intercultural leadership practices is paramount to successfully managing global business activities and efficiency and effectiveness in organizational performance. The findings of this study contribute to our knowledge of this field in Thailand.

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