GSAPS  THE SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS
THE DEVELOPMENT OF KAIZEN CONCEPT IN THAILAND’S INDUSTRIES

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Nowadays an issue of economic development has been discussing actively among the groups of both academic researchers and policy makers. All of the governments and their industries in the world are emphasizing to enhance their competitive advantage in order to be capable to lift up their production levels and keep maintaining their employment levels. They have been imitating both successful stories and practical logic concepts from the top achieved industries and enterprises from around the world. One of the concepts, which they have been interested and have allocated a lot of affords to duplicate, is the Kaizen concept. By definition, Kaizen means "ongoing improvement involving everyone, including both managers and workers (Imai, 1986: 3)". It has been famous among Japanese corporations and later among all the companies around the world for helping Japan to escape from many times of economic difficulties since after the World War II (Imai, 1986: 3; Lillrank & Kano, 1989: 6; Shimokawa, 1994: 27). Kaizen has helped the Corporate Japan to enhance its productivity during operations. Late 1970s Kaizen was introduced to overseas operations following the Japanese corporate expansion activities (Shimokawa, 1994: 72; Poapongsakorn, 2004).

However since almost three decades ago, a country, for example Thailand, still has limited Kaizen capability in terms of production processes and technological development (Poapongsakorn, 2004). According to the author's qualitative research on the history comparison of quality improvement between Japan and Thailand, Thailand could not develop the quality control and quality improvement as fast as Japan could due to lacks of sufficient human resources policies and improper worker behaviors that interrupt the problem solving process of government, associations, and companies. Comparing to Japanese government, Thai administrator ignored to initiate the reverse engineering policies and was slow to promote workers' skills that could raise worker's creativity and participation. The author (2009a)’s qualitative research (by the interviewing approach) found that the parts of the Kaizen problems in Thailand came from the behaviors of the local workers- Afraid to talk, Compromise, Lack of real action, and No life objective. These mentioned behaviors have been blocked worker's suggestions from the company's management. Consequently, the companies have been not able to recognize their problems and ask the proper helps from associations and government. The author (2009b) further conducted the qualitative approach based cultural research. The result shows that Thai workers' culture is comprised of High Power Distance, High Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism, Femininity, and Short Term Orientation.

In order to find out the proper characteristics for Kaizen development in Thailand, the Japanese characteristics and culture during the improvement process are identified as the proper behaviors and applied to explore problematic characters in Thai culture. Based on this research's literature reviews and interviews, Japanese workers' culture is comprised of High Power Distance, High Uncertainty Avoidance, Less Collectivism (when comparing to Thai culture), Masculinity, and Long Term Orientation. According to the cultural comparison between Japanese and Thai cultures, this research was able to identify characteristics of Collectivism, Femininity, and Short Term Orientation as the problematic cultures for Kaizen development activities.

By utilizing the cultural information above, the idea of PDCRA circles was formed for Kaizen development within this research. The new PDCRA circle was developed from the PDCA cycle of Dr. Deming and the cultural analysis by the author (2009b). According to author (2009c)’s research, the High Power Distance and High Uncertainty Avoidance behaviors could be identified as the advantageous behaviors to possibly construct the efficient report system to solve improper disadvantageous behaviors from Femininity, Collectivism, and Short-term Orientation. The mentioned report system is the document based suggestion sheet, which is implemented during the working process.

Based on the author (2009c)’s interviews and 6-month observation results, the new PDCRA circles, which incorporate the report step, could solve the cultural problems from Femininity, Collectivism, Short Term Orientation. The new continuous improvement's vehicle (PDCRA circles) was confirmed to start from planning activity, which defines a problem and a hypothesis about possible causes and solutions. The Hypothesis is tested in the Do phase. The results of the test are observed and evaluated in the Check phase. The result should be reported to management in the Report Step. If the results are unsatisfactory, the process goes back to Plan or Do to find the cause of unsatisfactory results. When a workable solution is found, it is standardized and implemented in the Action phase, which ends in a review of the whole procedure and suggestions about how to continue.

References