



Characteristics of high performing managers in The Netherlands

Characteristics of high performing managers

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Abstract

Purpose – Despite the abundance of literature on management it seems that the quality of management has not improved enough to prevent scandals which have occurred in recent years. It could be that either the results of these studies have not been put to use in practice or that the results were biased because of the rather one-sided focus on US managers in much of the leadership literature. As national cultures signal different determinants of high performance, there is a need for leadership research into the effectiveness characteristics of managers in non-US countries. This article aims to develop an empirically validated profile of high performing managers in The Netherlands using a leadership framework developed in Asia.

Design/methodology/approach – Based on a sample of 808 Dutch managers and using the cross-cultural framework of Excellent Leadership by Selvarajah *et al.*, the profile of an excellent Dutch manager was derived.

Findings – The paper reveals that this profile can be described by a four-dimensional factor structure consisting of managerial behaviours, environmental influences, personal qualities and organisational demands.

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

Practical implications – The results of the research can serve as guidelines for developing an empirically validated profile of high performance managers (HPMs) in other Western countries. They also have practical implications in that organizations can use the HPM profile to tailor their management development programs, evaluation and coaching programs, and recruiting processes in order to improve the quality of their managers.

Originality/value – To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first time a leadership framework developed in the Eastern world has been applied on Western managers, making this research one of the first of its kind. This is important because, as stated before, there is a strong need for research which extends the theoretical and practical basis of leadership theories from a solely Western focus to a more balanced Western-Eastern focus. The results from this type of research can provide guidance for improving quality of management worldwide.

Keywords Excellence, High performance managers, Leadership, Managers, Business excellence, The Netherlands

Paper type Research paper



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 effective management it seems that the quality of management has not improved, or at least not enough to prevent the scandals which have occurred in recent years, such as Parmalat, Ahold, and ABN Amro (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003; Endrissat *et al.*, 2005; Heifetz *et al.*, 2009; Morrison, 2000). An investigation of relevant literature sources revealed that many of the studies into effective leadership originated from research conducted on the North-American continent (see for an overview: Bass, 2008). It could be presupposed that either the results of these studies have not been put to use in practice (Walton and Dawson, 2001), or that the results were biased because of the one-sided focus on US managers. The latter could have as a consequence that the leadership literature results have limited relevance to non-US managers because they operate in and originate from different national cultures (Boyacigiller and Adler, 1991; House and Aditya, 1997; Kuchinke, 1999; Matic, 2008; Palrecha, 2009; Shao and Webber, 2006). As national cultures signal different determinants of high performance in terms of the traits, attitudes, and behaviors that people see as valuable, there is a need for academically grounded leadership research into the effectiveness characteristics of managers, performed in non-US countries. This article tries to develop an empirically validated profile of high performing managers (HPMs) in the Netherlands using a leadership framework developed in Asia. This so-called Excellent Leadership framework (Selvarajah *et al.*, 1995) is based on both Western and Eastern leadership literature and was developed by Asian managers and academics. Thus it can be assumed that the framework has a more global outlook and, therefore, might be more balanced than the aforementioned US-based leadership models. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time a leadership framework developed in the Eastern world has been applied on Western managers, making this research one of the first of its kind. This is important because, as stated before, there is a strong need for research which extends the theoretical and practical basis of leadership theories from a solely Western focus to a more balanced Western-Eastern focus. The results from this type of research can provide guidance for improving quality of management worldwide (Brewster *et al.*, 1996; McLean, 1991; Peterson, 1997). Thus the outcome of this research is twofold. First, the research results can be used as a guideline for developing an empirically validated profile of HPMs in other Western countries, thereby filling a gap in the leadership literature. Second, organisations can use the effectiveness characteristics to work in a focused manner on increasing the quality of their managers, and, herewith, improving the performance of organizations.

This article is organized as follows. In the next section the Excellent Leadership framework used in this study is introduced. Then, based on cultural theories developed by Hofstede (1980) and Globe (House *et al.*, 2004), hypotheses are developed which are subsequently tested using a sample of Dutch managers. The article ends with a

summary of the results, the limitations of the research, recommendations for further study, and 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 on 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; De Jong *et al.*, 2009; Smith *et al.*, 1989). The concept of excellence in leadership is seen by Selvarajah *et al.* (1995) as a combination of factors desirable for good leadership within a contextual framework.

The purpose of the Selvarajah *et al.*'s (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 and the Eastern literature. 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 four broad dimensions identified were:

- (1) Personal qualities.
- (2) Managerial behaviours.
- (3) Organisational demands.
- (4) Environmental influences (see Selvarajah *et al.*, 1995).

Personal Qualities are the personal values, skills, beliefs and qualities of an individual, irrespective of profession or organisation. These are the deep-rooted, personal factors that determine a person's approach to life in general, not just to management. They emphasise morality, religion, inter-personal relationships and communication. Managerial Behaviours cover a person's attitudes, actions and styles that are specific to the performance of the managerial task. They emphasise persuasive powers. Organizational Demands comprise the ways a manager reacts or responds to the

organisation's goals, objectives, structures, issues, demands, pressures and rewards. They emphasise the importance of organisational prosperity. Environmental Influences refer to the way managers react or respond to external factors that influence the operation and the success of the organisation. They emphasise the importance of scanning and evaluating the external environment for opportunities and threats. The dependant variable Excellent Leadership then comprises the combination of behaviours and attitudes desirable for good leadership within a certain cultural context (Selvarajah *et al.*, 2008).

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 previous four 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, at the Vocational Technical Institute (VOC-TECH), and at 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). Using only the most important statements for each dimension several studies (e.g. Taormina and Selvarajah (2005), Selvarajah and Meyer (2007, 2008), and Selvarajah *et al.* (2008) have shown that valid measures can be developed from these items for several Asian countries. It was found in these studies that the factor loading required for the dimensions differed across Asia, providing cultural insights into leadership behaviours and values in these countries. In this study we test this leadership model for the first time in the context of a Western country, The Netherlands.

Hypothesis 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 *H1*):

- H1.* A four-dimensional factor structure consisting of 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.
- (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 but at the same time can create inflexibility (Hofstede, 2001). It also means that employees should be evaluated objectively and consistently, 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 are flexible in using rules and procedures are highly valued.
- H5.* In The Netherlands, characterized by a culture with a medium level of uncertainty avoidance, managers who emphasize consistency 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, which is the degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational and aggressive in their relationship with others.
- (2) Collectivism I (institutional collectivism), which is 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), which is the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.
- (4) Future orientation, which is the extent to which individuals engage in future-oriented behaviours such as delaying gratification, planning and investing in the future.
- (5) Gender egalitarianism, which is the degree to which a collective minimizes gender inequality.
- (6) Humane orientation, which is the degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring and kind to others.
- (7) Performance orientation, which is the degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.
- (8) Power distance, which is the degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equal.
- (9) Uncertainty avoidance, which is 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 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 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. Potential participants were approached through the internet – in the period January to July 2009 – by means of the web site 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 cannot 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. In Table I details of the respondents are given.

Measures

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 an excellent leader in the organization, using an importance scale ranging from 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important). As such, the questionnaire explored perceptions of

	%
<i>Sex</i>	
Male	64
Female	34
<i>Age</i>	
< 35	12.9
35-40	20.2
41-45	19.9
46-50	20.2
51-55	24.8
56-60	0
> 60	2.1
<i>Sector</i>	
Profit	59.7
Not-for-profit	0.3
<i>Industry</i>	
Education	21.3
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
Others	11.3

Table I.

Details of the respondents **Note:** Respondents $n = 808$

what good management behavioural values should be. Excellent leadership was assessed with a scale including eight items, Personal Qualities with 13 items, Managerial Behaviours with 12 items, Organisational Demands with eight items, and Environmental Influences with seven items. Table II lists all items.

Analyses

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS version 18 was conducted in order to test whether the “Excellent Leadership” framework (Selvarajah *et al.*, 1995) could be found in the Dutch data, as suggested in the first hypothesis. This involved creating measurement models for the four hypothesised dimensions of leadership as well as the Excellent Leader construct itself. The measurement models showed acceptable validity (Byrne, 2001) with Goodness of Fit Indices (GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI) above 0.90, an SRMR below 0.05 and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) below 0.06 for each of the four Excellent Leadership dimensions as well as for the overall Excellent Leader construct. Tests for discriminant validity were carried out for these four dimensions using modification indices. The summated scales constructed for these five constructs showed acceptable reliability (Hair *et al.*, 1998) with Cronbach’s alpha values close to or above 0.70. The first hypothesis could then be tested using the correlations between the Excellent Leader scale and the scales for the four hypothesised dimensions. The remaining hypotheses were tested by determining whether the dimensions proposed by Selvarajah *et al.* (1995) included 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 four dimensions’ framework was supported using the Dutch data. Only those items selected as being important for the previous Asian studies were considered in this analysis. In total, 46 of the initial 94 items were omitted, which is in line with earlier research of Selvarajah *et al.* (2008) in Cambodia where 47 items were omitted.

As shown in Table II, “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 II 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.

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

Excellent Leadership value statement	Load	Mean	SD
EL1. Have confidence when dealing with work and people	0.628	4.43	0.609
EL2. Give recognition for good work	0.615	4.63	0.533
EL3. Create a sense of purpose and enthusiasm in the workplace	0.601	4.44	0.659
EL4. Motivate employees	0.569	4.51	0.632
EL5. Continue to learn how to improve performance	0.509	4.19	0.729
EL6. Have a strategic vision for the organisation	0.454	4.37	0.694
EL7. Organise work time effectively	0.425	4.16	0.706
EL8. Be honest	0.412	4.65	0.568
Environmental Influences value statement (Normed chi-square = 2.617, GFI = 0.98, AGFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.056, SRMR = 0.040)			
EI1. Have a multicultural orientation and approach	0.721	3.62	0.994
EI2. Foster an international perspective in the organisation	0.624	3.40	1.112
EI3. Be socially and environmentally responsible	0.558	4.14	0.733
EI4. Identify social trends which may have an impact on the work	0.466	3.93	0.708
EI5. Constantly evaluate emerging technologies	0.340	3.31	0.935
EI6. Use economic indicators for planning purposes	0.336	3.61	0.855
EI7. Be responsive to political realities in the environment	0.257	3.84	0.846
Personal Qualities value statements (Normed chi-square = 2.667, GFI = 0.97, AGFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.045, SRMR = 0.038)			
PQ1. Respect the self-esteem of others	0.576	4.45	0.597
PQ2. Be consistent in dealing with people	0.551	4.32	0.725
PQ3. Be dependable and trustworthy	0.541	4.79	0.464
PQ4. Accept responsibilities for mistakes	0.533	4.53	0.611
PQ5. Deal calmly in tense situations	0.520	4.22	0.665
PQ7. Listen to the advice of others	0.467	4.14	0.666
PQ8. Return favours	0.460	3.46	0.914
PQ9. Speak clearly and concisely	0.451	4.05	0.716
PQ10. Write clearly and concisely	0.445	3.95	0.747
PQ11. Follow what is morally right, not what is right for self or for the organisation	0.416	3.40	0.949
PQ12. Accept that others will make mistakes	0.403	4.28	0.723
PQ13. Have a sense of humour	0.400	4.05	0.713
PQ14. Be an initiator, not a follower	0.388	4.24	0.727
Managerial behaviours statements (Normed chi-square = 3.037, GFI = 0.97, AGFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.050, SRMR = 0.040)			
MB1. Make work decisions quickly	0.522	3.76	0.767
MB2. Select work wisely to avoid overload	0.508	3.69	0.836
MB3. Focus on the task-at-hand	0.498	3.56	0.823
MB4. Make decisions without depending too much on others	0.470	3.49	0.874
MB5. Listen to and understand the problems of others	0.450	4.10	0.709
MB6. Be logical in solving problems	0.438	3.90	0.751
MB7. Persuade others to do things	0.435	3.54	0.814
MB8. Make decisions earlier rather than later	0.396	3.45	0.859
MB9. Trust those to who work is delegated	0.387	4.38	0.622
MB10. Keep up-to-date on management literature	0.382	3.24	0.946
MB11. Delegate	0.351	4.27	0.666
MB12. Try different approaches to management	0.329	3.54	0.976

(continued)

Table II.
Items in the Excellent Leadership framework for Dutch managers

Excellent Leadership value statement	Load	Mean	SD	Characteristics of high performing managers
Organisational Demands value statement (Normed chi-square = 1.733, GFI = 0.99, AGFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.031, SRMR = 0.026)				
OD1. Adaptability	0.590	4.32	0.668	141
OD2. Share power	0.557	3.58	0.953	
OD3. Support decisions made jointly by others	0.547	4.04	0.747	
OD4. Focus on maximising productivity	0.508	3.65	0.793	
OD5. Sell the professional or corporate image to the public	0.477	4.14	0.795	
OD6. Act as a member of the team	0.411	4.36	0.721	
OD7. Give priority to long-term goals	0.373	3.93	0.759	
OD8. Adjust organisational structures and rules to realities of practice	0.347	3.65	0.874	

Table II.

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.

Personal Qualities are the personal values, skills, attitudes, behaviour and qualities of an individual. As Table II 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.

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 II 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.

Organisational Demands relate to the way a manager responds to the goals, objectives, structures and issues in an organisation. Table II 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 (Hofstede, 2001). It is therefore no wonder that Dutch people find “acting as a team” and “adaptability” very important because these characteristics facilitate consensus.

Summated scales were constructed for each of the four dimensions: Environmental Influences, Personal Qualities, Managerial Behaviours, and Organisational Demands

as well as an overall measure of Excellent Leadership. As shown in Table III, all these measures had reasonable scale reliabilities as measured using Cronbach's alpha while the GFI, RMSEA and other goodness of fit statistics confirmed the validity of each of these measures. 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 measures. As expected the scales for the four underlying dimensions correlated well with the overall measure of Leadership Excellence. These results confirm that the proposed Leadership Model, originally derived for an Eastern context, is supported in the Dutch context.

Discussion

Reflection on the outcomes

The results that have been outlined previously show that the framework for Excellent Leadership developed by Selvarajah *et al.* (1995) is valid to describe Dutch HPMS. Following the empirical outcomes of our study, the optimized (46 items were eliminated) Excellent Leadership survey comprehending 48 items (formulated in the form of statements) could be clustered into four dimensions and an overall Leadership Excellence measure. The research results show that the four-factor structure is a sound representation of the data, portraying reliable factors with high importance for Leadership Excellence in the Dutch situation. This outcome suggests strong support for the first hypothesis.

Table IV 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 14 hypotheses in Table IV, 13 are supported, only one (H6) is not supported. As regards this hypothesis (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

Table III.
Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha, and correlations between the model dimensions, *n* = 808

Variable	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4
Excellent Leader (EL)	4.42	0.388	0.749				
Environmental Influences (EI)	3.69	0.516	0.667	0.50***			
Organizational Demands (OD)	3.96	0.445	0.688	0.67***	0.61***		
Personal Qualities (PQ)	4.15	0.379	0.784	0.72***	0.57***	0.68***	
Managerial Behaviors (MB)	3.74	0.415	0.745	0.63***	0.57***	0.68***	0.68***

Notes: **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001

Hypothesis	Value statements which support the hypothesis	Confirmed?
H2	EL2, PQ1, PQ2, PQ7, PQ12, MB5, MB9 All value statements refer to managers being interested in their employees	Yes
H3	OD2, OD3, OD6 All value statements refer to managers willing to be part of a team which requires consensus	Yes
H4	MB12, OD8 Both value statements indicate flexibility of management, and therefore support the hypothesis	Yes
H5	EL8, PQ2, PQ3, PQ11 All value statements refer to managers being dependable and trustworthy, and therefore consistent.	Yes
H6	PQ11, OD2, OD6 The three value statements indicate management thinking in the interest of the team and the organisation, and therefore do not support the hypothesis	No
H7	MB11 This value statements refers to managers willing to delegate authority so that employees can take the initiative	Yes
H8	EL1, PQ5, MB4 All value statements refer to managers being sure of themselves	Yes
H9	PQ14, MB1, MB3, MB7, MB8, OD4 All value statements refer to managers being focused on achieve results	Yes
H10	EL6, EI7 All value statements refer to managers who look into the future, taking into account developments	Yes
H11	EL5, OD1, OD8 All value statements refer to managers who are willing to learn and adapt	Yes
H12	EL5, EI5, EI6, MB10, MB12 All value statements refer to managers who are willing to learn and improve	Yes
H13	EL6, EI4 Both value statements refer to managers who have ideas about the purpose of their organization	Yes
H14	EL3, PQ8, PQ13 All value statements refer to managers who create a positive environment and atmosphere	Yes
H15	PQ9, PQ10 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

Sources: H2, H3, H4, H5, H6 and H7 are derived from Hofstede (2001); H8, H9, H10, H11, H12, H13, H14, H15 and H16 from House *et al.* (2004)

Table IV.
Matching hypotheses with value statements

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 on 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 (Crompton 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 four 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.*, 2003) 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. Another possibility for further research is to apply the framework in other non-US leadership contexts to evaluate whether the framework has general applicability in the Western world. Finally, the relationship between the framework and organizational variables such as trust, commitment, satisfaction, performance, turnover, and safety can be investigated in order to obtain more detail about the interrelationships between these variables and managerial performance.

Practical implications

The framework of Excellent Leadership of Selvarajah *et al.* (1995) has been used to create a profile for the excellent Dutch manager. According to the HRM-performance framework (see Guest, 2002), each organisational member – with managers being no exception – needs to perform well in order to create a high performing organization. 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. Organizations can use the HPM profile to raise the quality of its management. They can do this for instance by letting the employees rate their managers on the 48 items, to evaluate the strong and weak points of these managers. The weak points can then be addressed by tailored management development programs and by specific coaching by other and/or higher managers. Managers who are performing well, according to their employees, on the 48 items are then the first in line for promotion. In time this will result in managers who fit the profile of the excellent Dutch manager better. Also organisations can apply the profile during its recruiting process to inform potential candidates for management positions on which items they will be evaluated. The subsequent evaluation will ensure that candidates who are offered a manager's position will fit the required HPM profile from the start. Together these strategies will increase the likelihood that the organization will prosper in the future.

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