

Professional Communication in Asia/Pacific Organisations: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This paper addresses the role of professional communication in manufacturing organisations in Australia, Thailand and Korea. Professional communication is seen as intentional communication that has the objective of achieving strategic goals within organisational or professional contexts. Within this view, practitioners need to consider communication as a core organisational process, be able to link communication with organisational outcomes and strategies, and assess cultural influences on the ways organisations function effectively.

The research study examines three questions concerning *the nature of the relationship between professional communication and other forms of organisational communication; the relationship between professional communication and organisational outcomes such as employees' job satisfaction; and the consistency of these communication relationships across cultures*. Responses of 2046 employees in Australia, Thailand and Korea to the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire and a measure of job satisfaction were analysed to provide the research findings. Hofstede's cultural characteristics in the workplace was used to provide a basis for cultural comparisons between the cultural groups.

The findings suggest there is a close relationship between dimensions of professional communication and other aspects of organisational communication. This relationship extends across the cultural groups involved in the study. The study found a number of professional communication dimensions to be significant predictors of job satisfaction in the organisations studied. Personal feedback and organisational integration were found to be the most important predictors across the three cultures.

It is concluded that it is essential that professional communicators understand the holistic nature of communication in organisations, and that they can make the link between communication and strategic goals. As such, there is a need to overcome the treatment of communication as a superficial aspect of organisational life, rather it needs to be seen as a core organisational process with multi-dimensional aspects. It is clear that although professional communication can be defined as a functional concept in organisational setting, its understanding and practice cannot be separated from, and is dependent upon, other communication activities in the organisation.

Keywords: professional communication, organizational communication, job satisfaction, Hofstede's Theory, personal feedback, organizational integration, strategic goals.

Introduction

In recent times the notion that communication simply reflects organisational realities has been rejected by contemporary scholars and replaced by a view that understands communication as a formative process which creates and represents the processes of organising (Putnam, Phillips and Chapman, 1996:396). In this contemporary view, organisations are structured and sustained through the articulation of meaning produced in communication. Organisational realities are established through these formative communication processes, power structures are developed and maintained, and organisational outcomes determined.

The role of professional communication in organisations needs to be similarly reconsidered. Until recently, professional communication has been seen as yet another organisational variable. Indeed, *better communication* has been considered an obvious solution to many managerial problems. Within this view, professional communicators played a limited and peripheral role in the management of organisations. They were seen to possess useful writing, presentational and public relation's skills; however, they were not really managers.

In the context of a more contemporary paradigm, Ticehurst and Ross-Smith have linked professional communication with organisational strategy. They define *professional communication as intentional communication that has the objective of achieving strategic goals within organisational or professional contexts* (1998:3). The development and maintenance of the linkage between communication and strategic goals of an organisation is the responsibility of the professional communicator. Linking professional communication with strategy is crucial to the way we think about professional communication, and the way we practice it.

To make this view of professional communication useful in contemporary organisations three orientations need to be developed by practitioners. First, there is a need to overcome the treatment of communication as a superficial aspect of organisational life; rather it needs to be seen as a core organisational process with multi-dimensional aspects. It is clear that although professional communication can be defined as a functional concept in organisational settings, its understanding and practice cannot be separated from, and is dependent upon, other communication activities in the organisation.

Second, the idea of communication as an inherent good in itself that requires no justification needs to be dispelled. Rather, the professional communicator must be one who can link diverse communication dimensions to organisational outcomes and strategies. To achieve this there is a need to move beyond simple communication formulas which see professional communication as a straightforward linear process, to a view which takes into account individual needs and cultural sensitivities.

Third, globalisation has forced an assessment of cultural influences on the ways organisations function effectively. While the exact dimensions of cultural similarities and differences are often hard to define, it is valuable to explore them when international business concerns make adaptation to national cultures necessary. Trompenaars, for example, maintains that

Organizational culture is shaped not only by technologies and markets, but also by the cultural preferences of leaders and employees. Some international companies... have subsidiaries, which would be unrecognizable, as the same company saves for their logo and reporting procedures. Often these are fundamentally different in the logic of the structures and the meanings they bring to shared activity.

(Trompenaars 1994:152)

With these orientations in mind, this paper describes a project that explores the role of professional communication in naturalistic organisational settings across three different cultures.

The Research Study

This study forms part of programmatic research concerned with the relationship between organisational communication and other organisational outcomes (see for example Downs, Ticehurst, Adrian, Potvin, Varona, and Gribas, 1995; Ticehurst, Iida and Downs, 1994; Ticehurst, Kang Duc Su, and Downs, 1997; Ticehurst and Ross-Smith, 1992). The study examined the role of professional communication in manufacturing organisations in three Asia/Pacific countries, Australia, Thailand and Korea, and addressed three research questions concerning professional communication, namely:

What is the nature of the relationship between professional communication and other forms of organisational communication?

What is the relationship between professional communication and organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction?

Are these relationships consistent across cultures?

In seeking to answer these questions, the study was directed towards employees' perceptions of professional communication rather than seeking to provide a managerial overview of communication policies and practices in the sample organisations.

The Sample

The sample used in the study involved employees from twelve manufacturing companies in Australia, Thailand and Korea. The range of manufacturing organisations and number of subjects from each of the sample organisations used in the study are shown in Table 1. As with most naturalistic research across cultures the matching of subjects and organisations was difficult. However, the matching was judged sufficiently appropriate to provide validity to the findings discussed here.

Table 1
Sample Organisations

Australia	
Food Packaging Manufacturer	100
Food Processing/Packaging Company	769
IT/Photocopier Manufacturer	70
Television Manufacturer	44
Apparel Manufacturer	30
Auto Manufacturer	100
Total	1113
Thailand	
Auto Manufacturer	119
Textile Manufacturer	200
Auto Parts Manufacturer	173
Total	492
Korea	
Auto Manufacturer	135
Auto Manufacturer	209
Auto Manufacturer	97
Total	441
Overall Total	2046

A number of scholars have sought to provide a basis for cultural comparisons between groups in workplace settings, the most well known being Hofstede (1994) and Trompenaars (1994). The dimensions of intercultural differences developed by Hofstede were used to describe the characteristics of the three national groups involved in this study; Trompenaars work did not provide a sufficiently comprehensive overview of these national groupings. The cultural characteristics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Cultural Characteristics in the Workplace (Hofstede, 1994)

Dimension	Australia	Thailand	Korea
Degree of Inequality	36	64	60
Power Distance Index	(low)	(medium)	(medium)
Individualism/Collectivism	90	20	18

Individualism Index	(very high)	(fairly low)	(fairly low)
Femininity/Masculinity	61	34	39
Masculinity Index	(fairly high)	(low)	(low)
Tolerance of Ambiguity	51	64	85
Uncertainty Avoidance Index	(low medium)	(medium)	(fairly high)
Confucianism – Long vs Short term Outlook	31	56	75
Long Term Orientation Index	(fairly low)	(fairly high)	(high)

The Instruments

The **Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ)** (Downs, 1988) was completed by employees in a range of manufacturing organisations in Australia, Korea and Thailand. The CSQ has been confirmed as having a high degree of validity and reliability across a number of organisations, and has been used extensively in the U.S., Great Britain, Netherlands, Australia, Thailand, Korea, China, Guatemala, Japan and Spain. Communication satisfaction can be considered as a multidimensional construct and has been described as "summing up" a person's satisfaction with information flow and relationship variables within an organisation. It provides an operational means of determining managers' and employees' comprehensive perceptions of communication in their organisational contexts. The communication satisfaction dimensions comprising the CSQ are shown in Table 3. The dimensions associated with professional communication are labeled with the letter (P).

In this study experienced translators translated the CSQ from English into Korean and Thai. The translated versions were then back translated to confirm their accuracy. To facilitate the acceptance of the research instruments by Korean and Thai managers whose support was needed to conduct the research, questions posed in the negative in the CSQ were rephrased to read positively in the Korean and Thai versions.

Table 3.

Dimensions of Communication Satisfaction

Organisational Perspective (P): Satisfaction with broad information about the organisation as a whole. Includes notification of changes, financial standing, organisational goal and policies.

Organisational Integration (P): Satisfaction with information about employee's immediate work environment - departmental plans, requirements of their jobs, some personnel news.

Communication Climate (P): Satisfaction with communication environment on a personal and organisational level. Includes extent to which communication in the organisation motivates and stimulates employees to meet organisation goals, and extent to which it makes them identify with the organisation. Includes estimates of whether people's attitudes toward communicating are healthy in the organisation.

Media Quality (P): Satisfaction with degree to which meetings are well organised, written communication is clear, and the amount of communication in the organisation is about right.

Communication with Top Management (P): Satisfaction with the extent to which senior management communicates with employees.

Interdepartmental Communication (P): Satisfaction with communication. between departments including sense of teamwork, agreement on joint priorities, managers communicating.

Personal Feedback: Satisfaction with feedback about employee's performance and how they are appraised.

Relationship with Supervisor: Satisfaction with communication with supervisor - open to ideas, listens and pays attention, guidance is offered in solving job related problems.

Horizontal and Informal Communication: Satisfaction with perceptions of the grapevine, and the degree to which horizontal and informal communication is accurate and free flowing.

Relationship to Subordinates: (only answered by managers/ supervisors) Satisfaction with communication with subordinates and their degree of helpfulness.

(P) - CSQ dimensions related to professional communication

Job satisfaction was evaluated using a global measure in which respondents were asked to indicate their degree of job satisfaction measured on seven-point scale. Job satisfaction can be seen as an individual's emotional evaluative response to their job (Downs, Clampitt and Pfeiffer, 1988). Pincus and Rayfield (1989) define job satisfaction as *an organisational member's perceptual response to the aspects of his or her job and organization environment considered most important to meeting his or her work needs/expectations.*

The Australian data were collected in the period 1994 to 1996, and the Thai data were collected in 1996. These were periods of industrial stability in Australia and Thailand.

The Korean data were collected in 1997 and coincided with industrial tension in Korea. This was the result of growing wages and increased democracy that saw employees seeking more participation in decision making. In late 1966 labour law changes allowing workers to be laid off were rushed through the Korean parliament and legislation to allow multiple unions at enterprise and national level was deferred.

Results

The relationship between professional communication and other forms of organisational communication

Table 4 shows the values of the Pearson bivariate correlation coefficient (r) between each of the dimensions comprising the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire. Within each cell the coefficients are shown for each cultural grouping - Australia, Thailand and Korea. The values of the coefficients indicate a medium to high correlation ($r = 0.4 \sim 0.8$) between all communication dimensions and this is consistent across the three cultures.

The six *professional communication* dimensions show strong interrelationships as a group.

Additionally, there were strong relationships outside the six dimensions were classified as professional communication. For example, *personal feedback* is highly correlated with *organisational integration*, *communication climate* and *relationship to supervisor*. There is also a strong relationship between *relationship to supervisor* and *communication climate* across the three cultures.

In overview, the strengths of the relationships shown in Table 4 are comparatively high in relation to values usually found in much social research. These values suggest that the various components of professional communication cannot be considered in isolation from other aspects of professional communication, or in isolation from other aspects of organisational communication generally. This includes relationships between supervisors and employees, as well as informal communication.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation (r) between Organisational Communication Dimensions

Cell Key Pearson r Values (all signif. p < 0.01) <i>Australia</i> <i>Thailand</i> <i>Korea</i>	ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE	ORGANISATIONAL INTEGRATION	COMMUNICATION CLIMATE	MEDIA QUALITY	COMMUNICATION WITH TOP MANAGEMENT	INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION	PERSONAL FEEDBACK
ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE (P)	1.000						
ORGANISATIONAL INTEGRATION (P)	.698 .677 .713	1.000					
COMMUNICATION CLIMATE (P)	.630 .558 .612	.724 .698 .621	1.000				
MEDIA QUALITY (P)	.623 .526 .631	.702 .661 .615	.855 .750 .762	1.00			
COMMUNICATION WITH TOP MANAGEMENT (P)	.596 .596 .601	.619 .665 .529	.714 .663 .595	.717 .685 .619	1.000		
INTERDEPART'L COMMUNICATION (P)	.517 .516 .540	.587 .604 .512	.733 .712 .615	.742 .766 .673	.670 .700 .604	1.000	
PERSONAL FEEDBACK	.599 .549 .651	.819 .751 .713	.749 .703 .689	.667 .576 .649	.608 .561 .562	.582 .616 .546	1.000
RELATIONSHIP TO SUPERVISOR	.404 .434 .532	.614 .619 .573	.629 .701 .728	.561 .655 .714	.460 .606 .534	.474 .624 .549	.697 .751 .629
HORIZONTAL COMMUNICATION	.557 .487 .548	.621 .596 .535	.727 .634 .649	.767 .695 .756	.596 .594 .538	.691 .659 .604	.610 .516 .553
RELATIONSHIP TO SUBORDINATES	.441 .479 .512	.528 .660 .531	.467 .557 .542	.440 .676 .582	.421 .650 .512	.394 .658 .490	.438 .655 .494

Communication satisfaction across cultures

The mean scores and standard deviations for employees on each of the ten factors comprising the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire are shown in Table 5. Differences between means for the ten factors were tested using a MANOVA procedure. This procedure indicated that statistically significant differences were present between the cultural groups for the means of each of the CSQ factors ($p < 0.001$).

Post-hoc follow up comparisons were made to test for individual difference between the means on each dimension. A clear pattern emerged from these comparisons to indicate that Thai employees were generally more satisfied ($p < 0.01$) than their Australian or Korean counterparts on each of the six professional communication dimensions, namely *organisational perspective*, *organisational integration*, *communication climate*, *media quality*, *communication with top management*, and *interdepartmental communication*. In addition, the Korean group was significantly less satisfied ($p < 0.01$) with *communication with top management* compared to the Australian and the Thai groups.

A different pattern of responses emerged in the two dimensions describing the reciprocal relationship between supervisor and subordinates, namely *relationship to supervisor* and *relationship to subordinates*. Each cultural group was significantly different to the other groups ($p < 0.01$) on both dimensions. The Australian group was moderately satisfied with the relationship, the Thais slightly satisfied, and the Koreans bordered on indifferent.

Mean responses to the remaining dimensions, *personal feedback* and *horizontal/informal communication* reflected a pattern somewhat similar to the professional communication dimensions discussed above.

An important pattern emerges among the standard deviation of responses on the ten dimensions shown in Table 5. In each case, the Australian group has the highest standard deviation, the Thais a middle value, and the Korean group has the lowest value. *This result suggests a greater spread of responses among the Australian sample and more uniform responses among the Thais and Koreans*. This pattern is consistent with Hofstede's Individualism Index shown in Table 2 in which Australians are expected to be more individualistic in their responses.

Job satisfaction across cultures

The mean scores and standard deviations for job satisfaction are shown in Table 6.

The Australian and Thai responses suggested these groups were moderately satisfied with their job, while the Koreans were slightly satisfied to indifferent. The Australian and Thai means were significantly different to the Korean mean. The standard deviation indicated greater variance among the Australian responses compared to the Thai group, which was similar to responses on the communication satisfaction dimensions discussed above. However the Korean group had the highest standard deviation of the three groups on job satisfaction.

Table 5

Mean Scores: Communication Satisfaction

Communication Dimensions	Australian (n=1113)		Thai (n=492)		Korean (n=441)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Organisational perspective (P) (*)	4.02	1.45	3.67	1.08	3.88	.88
Organisational integration (P) (*)	3.63	1.33	3.33	1.04	3.74	.87
Communication climate (P) (*)	4.02	1.42	3.32	1.01	3.89	.86
Media quality (P) (*)	3.74	1.34	3.09	1.00	3.80	.81
Communication with top management (P) (***)	3.95	1.69	3.57	1.33	4.32	1.12
Interdepartmental communication (P) (*)	4.07	1.46	3.24	1.08	3.97	.93
Personal feedback (*)	4.09	1.48	3.30	1.04	4.01	.82
Relationship to supervisor (***)	2.91	1.47	3.06	1.11	3.75	.93
Horizontal/Informal communication (**)	3.48	1.21	3.33	.88	3.74	.82
Relationship to subordinates (***)	2.61	1.06	2.96	.86	3.58	.73

Scale values for Communication Satisfaction items, 1= very satisfied - 7 = very dissatisfied

Scheffe Post-Hoc Multiple Comparison Tests

(*) Australian and Korean subsets significantly different to Thai subset ($p < 0.05$).

(**) Australian and Thai subsets significantly different to Korean subset ($p < 0.05$).

(***) Australian, Thai and Korean subsets significantly different to each other ($p < 0.05$).

Table 6

Job Satisfaction

	Australian (n=1113)		Thai (n=492)		Korean (n=441)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Job satisfaction (**)	2.61	1.41	2.79	1.16	3.33	1.46

Scale values for Job Satisfaction were 1 = very satisfied - 7 = very dissatisfied

Scheffe Post-Hoc Multiple Comparison Tests

(**) Australian and Thai subsets significantly different to Korean subset ($p < 0.05$).

Relationship between professional communication and job satisfaction

A number of studies have investigated the relationship between selected aspects of communication and the organisational outcome of job satisfaction. The studies focused on communication as a causal or intervening variable and suggested a number of significant relationships between communication and job satisfaction (Pincus and Rayfield, 1989; Ticehurst and Ross-Smith, 1992).

This study investigated the relationship between the CSQ dimensions associated with professional communication and job satisfaction. Some of the CSQ dimensions that were not associated with professional communication were also included in the analysis.

Job satisfaction was entered as the dependent variable in separate multiple regression analyses for the three cultural groups. Nine CSQ factors were entered as predictor (independent) variables into each of the three analyses. The factors were entered into the analysis as two sets. The first set comprised professional dimensions and the second set comprised the non-professional dimensions. The variables in each set were entered into the analysis stepwise.

The CSQ factor, *relationship with subordinates* was omitted from the three analyses since only managers answered these items.

The results of these regression analyses are shown in Table 7.

Personal feedback and *organisational integration* were predictor variables for job satisfaction for each of the manufacturing groups. *Communication climate* was also a predictor for the Australian and Korean groups. *Relationship to supervisor* and *organisational perspective* were additional predictors for the Australian group.

It is important to note that the significant professional communication predictors, *organisational integration*, *communication climate*, and *organisational perspective* relate more to employees' integration into their organisation than to traditional notions of professional communication such as *communication with top management* and *media quality*. Similarly, the non-professional predictors, *personal feedback* and *relationship to supervisor*, concern relational issues in the workplace.

The proportion of variance (R^2) in job satisfaction accounted for by the communication satisfaction factors was higher (0.39) for the Australian group than for the Thai (0.20) or Korean (0.30) groups.

Table 7

Predictors for Job Satisfaction

Manufacturing Group	Predictors for job satisfaction ($p < 0.05$)
Australia (n=1113)	Personal feedback Comm climate Relationship to supervisor Org integration Org perspective $R^2 = 0.39$
Thai (n=492)	Personal feedback Org integration $R^2 = 0.20$
Korea (n=441)	Comm climate Org integration Personal feedback $R^2 = 0.30$

Discussion and observations

The research described in this paper provides important insights into the role of professional communication in organisational settings in a number of different cultures.

1. Relationships among dimensions of professional communication and other forms of organisational communication are strong.

The first research question concerned *the nature of the relationship between professional communication and other forms of organisational communication.*

The results shown in Table 4 indicate a strong relationship between all the components of communication in an organisation. These data suggest that the PROFESSIONAL communicator must be aware of the various components of communication and that a strategic approach to communication will not allow one dimension to be considered in isolation from other aspects of organizational communication, or in isolation from other aspects of communication generally. Professional communication remains an important component of organisational communication; however, its dimensions form one part of the wider spectrum of communication activities that characterise the contemporary workplace. In workplace settings this range of communication activities may be differentiated but still should not be isolated from other aspects of organizational communication..

The consistent pattern across the three cultures also indicates that the strong interrelationships among dimensions of communication belies cultural differentiation.

2. Relationships among professional communication dimensions and job satisfaction are evident, as professional communication dimensions are significant predictors of job satisfaction in organisations.

The second research question concerned *the relationship between professional communication and organisational outcomes such as employees' job satisfaction.*

The results indicate a positive relationship between a number of professional communication dimensions and employees' job satisfaction, although these links are not consistent across the three groups studied. Of particular significance is the fact that the Australian sample have more predictors than did the other two groups, and they were the only one to organizational perspective as a predictor. This is significant because *organisational perspective* is the dimension that most epitomizes the objectives of most directors of corporate communication. It may be that this is most important to people in individualistic and low power distance cultures.

In relation to job satisfaction, communication satisfaction was a more significant predictor variable for the Australian group (0.39) than for the Thai (0.20) or Korean (0.30) groups, as shown in Table 7. These data suggest that communication may be more important in the formation of organisational outcomes in a culture such as Australia with a low power distance index, an individualist orientation, high tolerance of ambiguity and a relatively short-term orientation. This is in comparison to cultures with a high power distance orientation, a collectivist orientation, low tolerance of ambiguity, and a more long-term outlook such as Thailand and Korea. Furthermore, it may be that general communication plays a more significant role in cultures which are individualistic and have a low power distance orientation. In those cultures, perhaps organisations must do more to please the employees.

3. The most consistent predictors of job satisfaction in each cultural group are personal feedback and organisational integration. This is perhaps one of the most meaningful discoveries of the study for two reasons.

First, both these dimensions focus on the immediate work unit and suggest a need for the recognition of employees' efforts by managers. While *organisational integration* is classified as a dimension of professional communication, *personal feedback* is normally the responsibility of the immediate supervisor. These relational/integrative dimensions are more important in predicting job satisfaction than traditional notions of professional communication such as *communication with top management* and *media quality*, neither of which show any statistical significance. This finding certainly should encourage communication professionals to pay particular attention to feedback systems in their organizations as well as systems, which make the worker feel integrated and linked to the organization.

However, this point needs to be considered in light of the high degree of common variance among the communication dimensions used in the study. The proportion of variance in job satisfaction predicted by the CSQ dimensions was higher for the Australian sample than for the Thai or Korean groups.

Second, while some cultural differences surface in this research, it is noteworthy to call special attention to a similarity that cuts across cultures. *Organisational integration* and *personal feedback* are predictors in all three cultures. Therefore, regardless of the power distance and the scores on collectivism, workers are still oriented toward their immediate work situations and particularly in getting personal feedback and recognition of how well they are doing. Performance feedback, for example, is often associated with individualistic societies, but these data suggest that there is a need to develop such systems in any society. The actual form such a system would take may vary across cultures, but the function of feedback is seen as important by all. As Downs has found in China, there is a kind of personal concern even in collective societies, and perhaps our theoretical definitions of collectivism need to be revised.

4. Another indication of the importance of the immediate job environment is indicated by the fact that in all three cultures the most satisfying scores were given to the relationship with supervisors and the relationships with subordinates. Nevertheless, each cultural group was significantly different to the other groups ($p < 0.01$) on both dimensions. The Australian group was moderately satisfied with the relationship, the Thais slightly satisfied, and the Koreans bordered on indifferent.

5. Additional effects of culture can be inferred from the differences revealed in the mean scores and standard deviations for communication satisfaction, shown in Table 5.

The Thai group was significantly more satisfied than the Korean or Australian groups on each of the six professional communication dimensions. The causal explanation of this difference is difficult, however an examination in terms of cultural differences shown in Table 2 may be useful. Compared to the Australian group the Thai group has a higher acceptance of inequality, is more collectivist and feminine and has a more long-term orientation. Compared to the Korean group the Thai group is more tolerant of ambiguity but has a shorter long-term outlook. This combination of qualities may well lead to the higher levels of satisfaction expressed by the Thai group. The unrest in the Korean organisations may also be relevant. The Korea experience may also call attention to the fact that cultures change so that cultural descriptors at one time may not fit later.

As noted earlier, a consistent pattern is shown among the standard deviations detailed in Table 5. For each of the ten communication dimensions the Australian group has the highest standard deviation, the Thais a middle value, and the Korean group has the lowest value. This pattern is consistent with Hofstede's Individualism Index shown in Table 2, and suggests a more uniform perception of the level of communication satisfaction in collectivist cultures.

The results indicated a significant relationship between all the dimensions of communication studied. The highest correlations were among the dimensions associated with professional communication. This pattern was consistent across the three cultures that were investigated.

In relation to communication satisfaction, the Thai employees were found to be consistently more satisfied on the professional communication dimensions than the Australian or Korean groups. A different pattern of responses emerged for the two dimensions describing the relationship between supervisor and subordinates. The Australian group was moderately satisfied with the relationship, the Thais slightly satisfied, and the Koreans bordered on indifferent. The standard deviation of responses to the communication satisfaction dimensions indicated a greater spread of responses among the Australian sample, and more uniform responses among the Thais and Koreans. This pattern is consistent with Hofstede's Individualism Index shown in Table 2.

In relation to organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction, communication satisfaction was a more significant predictor variable for the Australian group than for the Thai or Korean groups.

Conclusion

The third research question concerned the *consistency of these communication relationships across cultures*. As noted earlier, the exact dimensions of cultural differences in research are often hard to pinpoint.

In the preceding pages some suggestions were made to explain this range of differences in terms of Hofstede's (1994) cultural characteristics. These suggestions could well form a basis for further studies seeking to clarify these issues. In seeking to understand intercultural effects it is also important to identify areas in which there are no cultural differences. As noted earlier, although the exact dimensions of cultural similarities and differences are often hard to define, it is valuable to explore them when increasing internationalisation makes adaptation to national cultures necessary. In a cross cultural management context, understanding the predictive role of particular communication factors can play an important part in the development of organisational strategies designed to improve productivity, the quality of management, and the quality of worklife for all employees.

The outcomes of this study reflect the complex interrelationship among communication dimensions within organisations and across cultures. It is essential that professional communicators understand the holistic nature of communication in organisations, and that they can make the link between communication and strategic goals.

As such, there is a need to overcome the treatment of communication as a superficial aspect of organisational life; rather it needs to be seen as a core organisational process with multi-dimensional aspects, as noted earlier. It is clear that although professional communication can be defined as a functional concept in organisational setting, its understanding and practice cannot be separated from, and is dependent upon, other communication activities in the organisation.

Finally from a theoretical basis, culture studies must continue to be updated. Economic and political forces do produce new changes, as they seem to be doing in Korea so that old characterizations may not fit. Furthermore, even some of the characterization labels may need to be refined. For example, this study shows the necessity of providing personal feedback even in collective societies. Investigating current practices and realities challenges and improves theory.

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