Human Relationships (*Ningen Kankei*), Organizational Consciousness (*Dantai Ishiki*), and Continuous Improvement (*Kaizen*): Meta-values in Japanese Education with Motivating Force

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Abstract

This paper identifies three *meta-values* that have a significant influence on education in Japan. A meta-value will be defined as a socially-constructed concept that is highly valued within a profession; it describes the underlying ethical postures characteristic of particular professions (e.g. mission for soldiers; best interests of students for educators; profit, growth, maintenance and survival for corporations (Begley, personal communication, October 31, 2010). The meta-values include: a focus on human relationships (*ningen kankei*); organizational consciousness (*dantai ishiki*); and continuous improvement (*kaizen*). An analysis of each meta-value, along with a review of the related themes in the literature may provide insight into how these concepts promote sustainability in relationships and leadership within Japanese schools. The literature review discusses selected elements of Japanese leadership practice observed by scholars in the field of educational leadership. This paper attempts to demonstrate the importance of examining non-western education systems and their associated meta-values as a means to further develop the field of educational leadership and enhance cross-cultural understanding.

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Scholars in the field of educational administration have given little attention to leadership practice as it exists in Japanese schools. This reinforces assertions that Western theories of educational leadership dominate and that the field of educational administration has developed along ethnocentric lines (Dimmick & Walker, 2005; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998). Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) also observe that, "…scholars have devoted little effort towards uncovering cultural foundations of leadership" (p. 129). Moreover, Begley (2010a) asserts that value conflicts in the cultural domain are becoming more frequent due to increasing diversity in western society and the world in general. Many of these value conflicts occur at schools. Therefore, school leaders should develop the ability to interpret and understand value conflicts in the cultural domain and respond appropriately. The study of *meta-values* and associated themes that are

separate and distinct from one's own may serve as a sophisticated method of understanding and thus add to an educational leader's capacity to understand the valuation processes of others - a key component in Begley's (2010b) conception of authentic leadership. This understanding may reduce the propensity for value conflicts in the cultural domain.

To be clear, I will examine three *meta-values*: human relationships (*ningen kankei*); organizational consciousness (*dantai ishiki*); and continuous improvement (*kaizen*) that have a strong influence on the education profession in Japan. This paper attempts to demonstrate the importance of examining non-western education systems and their associated meta-values as a means to further develop the field of educational leadership and enhance cross-cultural understanding.

Why Meta-Values in Japanese Education?

This paper is the result of my experience living and working in Nagasaki, Japan from 2002 to 2007. During this period, I taught in a public high school and a private liberal arts university. This memorable experience has shaped my view of leadership and causes me constantly to compare educational leadership in Japanese and Canadian contexts with the hope that something may be learned on both sides of the Pacific.

The first section attempts to sort out the terminology by defining *meta-value* and *culture*. Subsequently, several views on contemporary Japanese culture and society are briefly introduced. Each meta-value is then defined in a Japanese societal context followed by an explanation of the relevance to the field of educational leadership. The final section reviews the relevant literature by Western scholars on leadership practice in Japanese organizations and identifies themes related to the meta-values under examination.

Defining Meta-Value and the Associated Terminology

A discussion on the term *meta-value* is needed to explain its roots and to understand how the concept fits into the literature on values, ethics, and educational leadership. A meta-value is defined as a socially constructed concept that is highly valued within a profession (P.T. Begley personal communication, October 31, 2010). Begley (2010a) applies the term meta-value to describe the underlying ethical postures characteristic of particular professions. For example: *the mission* for soldiers; *in the best interests of the student* for educators; and *profit, growth, maintenance and survival* for corporations. Prior to moving forward, the relationship between Maslow's (1967) *B-values* and Begley's (2010a) conception of *ethics* as they relate to meta-values needs to be clarified.

B-Values and Ethics

The term meta-value may have its roots in Maslow's (1971) conception of *B-values*. Maslow

(1967) asserts that these *B-Values* and *metamotivation* are characteristic of self-actualizing individuals (those with their basic needs satisfied on Maslow's *hierarchy of needs*). Examples of *B-values* include: *simplicity*, *truth*, and *self-sufficiency* (Maslow, 1967). Maslow (1967) explains that "in examining self-actualizing people directly, I find that in all cases, at least in our culture, they are dedicated people devoted to some task 'outside themselves,' some vocation, or duty, or beloved job" (p. 94). *B-values* have congruency with Begley's (2010a) conception of *ethics,* defined as "…normative social ideals or codes of conduct usually grounded in the cultural experience of particular societies. In that sense, they are an *uber* form of social consensus" (p. 35). Begley (2010a) is clear that ethics are not to be confused with the study of ethics as a discipline. Meta-values and ethics have similarities and it is important to clarify each term.

Meta-values versus ethics

"…Ethics are usually understood as highly distilled first principles" (P.T. Begley, personal communication, September 30, 2012). As noted, meta-values are ethical postures that educators use to guide decision-making in a given profession (Begley, 2010a). The fundamental difference between ethics and meta-values is the notion that ethics are context-stripped while meta-values are ethical postures related to a specific profession (Begley, 2010a). However, the motivational grounding for meta-values and ethics is similar and this will be discussed in the next section. To summarize, a meta-value shares some of the same qualities of *ethics,* but the key distinction is the professional context which is highly relevant for meta-values, but not for ethics (Begley, 2010a).

The motivational grounding of meta-values

The motivational grounding of meta-values must be clarified by examining Hodgkinson's (1978, 1991, 1996) *values paradigm*, which is a useful theoretical tool to help one gain an understanding of axiology (the study of values) in educational leadership. Hodgkinson (1991) defines a *value* as a conception of the desirable with motivating force. An overview of the values paradigm follows where Hodgkinson (1991) identifies three types of values:

- *Type III: a value-based perspective that is concerned with preference.*
- *Type II: a value-based perspective is where most school leaders have learned to exist, concerned with rational behavior. Within Type II, there are two classifications, type IIa (pragmatist) and type IIb (politician).*
- *Type I: A value-based perspective that is trans-rational and deals with belief and will. Trans-rational values are deep convictions and will not be compromised.*

The connection between the values paradigm and the term meta-value is related to the *type* of value-based perspective or motivational grounding. Hodgkinson (1991) asserts that a *type I* value-based perspective is trans-rational in nature. Further, Begley (2010a) notes that the term *ethics* is used to represent a special category of values that are trans-rational in nature. As noted, a meta-value is a context laden-form of an ethic. Thus, a meta-value may be considered as an ethical posture common to as specific profession that is trans-rational in nature. Meta-values and ethics share this trans-rational quality.

Meta-values and societal context

Stefkovich and O'Brien (2004) and Begley (2010b) have identified *in the best interests of the student* and *accountability* as meta-values or ethical postures guiding the education profession. It is important to note that these meta-values are situated in a North American context. Further, the interpretation or meaning related to specific ethics varies depending on the cultural context and therefore ethics vary significantly from society to society (Begley, 2010a). Since meta-values are socially-constructed ethical postures with similar qualities to ethics, I would argue that they also have significant variation from society to society.

In Japanese society, *in the best interests of the student* is an influential ethical posture, but other meta-values have greater relevance, including *a human-relations orientation*, *organizational consciousness*, and *continuous improvement*. The underlying ethical postures of educators in Japan are rooted in societal culture and these meta-values will be explored further and related to the literature within educational leadership. Since *culture* plays a significant role in the development and understanding of meta-values at the societal level, it is necessary to tackle this nebulous term.

Defining Culture

Culture is a difficult concept with a number of competing definitions. Walker (2003) notes that there only seems to be general agreement on a definition of culture with the anthropological definition favored by most scholars in the field of educational leadership. The anthropological interpretation, as presented by Hofstede, (in Walker, 2003) identifies culture as "…patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting underpinning the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group category from another" (p.155). It is important to distinguish between societal culture and organizational culture. Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) comment that organizational culture is only part of the broader societal culture of which scholars must be cognizant. Hoy and Miskel (2005) state that organizational culture develops when members interact and "shared values, norms, beliefs, and ways of thinking emerge" (p. 37).

Begley's (2006) notion of *arenas of influence* identifies the *cultural domain* as an *arena of influence* where value conflicts may occur. School leaders operate within this *cultural arena* on a daily basis as they interact with students, parents, and members of the community who often do not share the same cultural background. As noted, a sophisticated understanding of meta-values by school leaders may reduce the propensity for value conflicts within a school community. Moving forward, it is important to gain a basic understanding of contemporary Japanese society as a means to set the context for the later section on meta-values in Japan.

Japanese Society and Culture

In order to frame the discussion on meta-values in Japanese education, I will introduce three key elements of Japanese culture. These include *collectivism*, *Bushido*, and the concept of *amaeru* (dependency). I will also discuss recent developments in Japanese society as presented by leading scholars in the area. The main assertion in Grace Benedict's (1946) classic, *The chrysanthemum and the sword* is that Japanese culture is collectivistic and hierarchical in nature - the values and goals of the group take precedence over the individual and that one is expected to understand and internalize his station in life. This value orientation remains inherent in contemporary Japanese society (Nakane, 1973). In a recent study on deviance in university students, Fukushima et al. (2009) found that a collectivistic orientation among Japanese College students living in the USA remains influential and reduces the propensity towards deviant behavior.

Japanese society developed with a strong focus on hierarchical structures and filial piety gleaned from principles of Confucianism (Benedict, 1946). More specifically, *Bushido* or the samurai code is a Japanese extension of Confucianism and places great emphasis on stoicism and the rigid samurai class system (Nitobe, 1920). Inazo Nitobe's (1920) *Bushido* remains an influential work in Japan. During my five years living and working in Japan, I observed that *Bushido*, the work or the concept, could be discussed with high school students, cardiologists, and automobile mechanics with the same vigor - it continues to have a significant influence in Japanese society.

Contemporary Japan society remains a mystery to many western scholars who attempt to understand it by comparing it to their own (Levine, 2001). Levine (2001) asserts "Japanese conceptions of interpersonal relations, family life, and the life cycle as described in a half-century social science research by American and Japanese investigators are as different from Western ones as those of any non-Western culture" (p.xiii).

Moreover, scholars like Nakane (1973) maintain that contemporary Japanese society has not changed significantly since feudal times. The psychologist Takeo Doi's (1981) foundational work on Japanese psychology and the concept of dependency (*amaeru*) provides insight into the importance of roles and dependency in Japanese culture. Doi's work has been expanded upon by scholars like Rice (2001) and Kobayashi (2001) who identify the dependent bond that Japanese children form with their mother as directly related to the concept of dependency (*amaeru*). *Collectivism*, *Bushido*, and the concept of dependency (*amaeru*) are conceptual frames that provide a backdrop for my examination of meta-values in Japanese education.

Over the past fifteen years, Harvard's Theodore Bestor (1990, 2001, 2004) and Helen Hardacre (2004, 2007) have made significant contributions to the understanding of contemporary Japanese society. From an anthropological perspective Bestor's (1990, 2001, 2004) work has focused on Japanese institutions that reflect the contemporary nature of the societal culture, specifically, the world famous Tsukiji fish market, the Japanese neighborhood, and the nature of small business in Japan. Bestor (2001) comments that, "Japan has become increasingly central as a source for North American and popular culture" (p. 82). This may be surprising for many North Americans who believe that cultural influence flows from West to East (Bestor, 2001).

Hardacre (2004) focuses on the relationship between Japanese religion and civil society, specifically the notion that religious organizations were founded at the same time as civil society in Japan, although the patterns of development were slightly different. Media sensationalism of tragic events (eg. the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack of 1995) continues to have a profound effect on Japanese society. Hardacre (2007) examines the influence of the Japanese media on society specifically in reference to the subway gas attacks and asserts "…it is necessary to analyze the narrative strategies the media utilize to represent religion, recognizing that these depend upon the media's arrangements with government for the production and distribution of information" (p. 204). In my opinion, Hardacre's (2007) analysis of the media's influence in Japan may also be applicable to the Fukushima nuclear plant meltdown of 2011 where the narrative strategies employed by the media were highly questionable.

Japan has dealt with earthquakes and tsunami throughout its history. Moreover, approximately 70% of Japan's national land is mountainous and the majority of population, assets, industrial activities and infrastructure are located on low-lying vulnerable coastlines (Mimura, 2011). This leaves the country highly vulnerable to earthquakes and the subsequent tsunami. Japanese society continues to deal with the after effects of *3/11*, referring to the tragic events triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami, and meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear plant. However, as Sebag-Montefiore (2012) observes "the disaster provoked an unprecedented mobilization of volunteers, public outcry following the Fukushima cover-up and the stirrings of new construction and architectural ambitions" (p. 1).

It was remarkable that despite this terrible disaster, Japanese society was able to demonstrate a cohesive national response characterized by cooperation, respect, diligence and empathy. Rioting, looting, and panic did not occur in the aftermath of the earthquake, tsunami, and Fukushima nuclear meltdown. An anecdote from a colleague in Tokyo illustrates this point. As a result of the earthquake, all businesses ceased operation on March 11, 2011 and mass transit (subways and trains) in the Tokyo area were not in operation. Therefore, millions of commuters in Tokyo metropolitan area were forced to walk home. Many people were facing an eight to nine hour walk home. Convenience owners decided to keep their shops open after the earthquake so that on-foot commuters could stop for water, food or in many cases new socks due to the length of the long walk home in the wake of the earthquake. I question how Canadian society would cope with a natural disaster on the scale of Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami, and meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear plant.

Meta-Values in Japanese Education

The following section will provide a working definition for each meta-value and its relevance to educational leadership in Japan. The meta-values were identified using two methods. The first method was an analysis of my experience living and working in Japan between 2002 and 2007. I observed my day-planner and correspondence with co-workers during this time. I informally recalled several critical incidents that shaped my experience (Begley 2010a). Since returning to Canada in 2007, I continue to refine my understanding of this experience and visit Japan regularly. The second method focused on a literature review of articles and books related to leadership, management, and culture in Japan. These works seemed to appear serendipitously and three specific meta-values in the education profession emerged.

Human Relationships Ningen Kankei

The concept of *ningen kankei* is directly translated as *human relationships,* which may seem rather simplistic. However, Japanese society has a sophisticated understanding of the term as demonstrated in Nakane's (1972) *Human relations in Japan*, a book that explores the nature of personal relationships in Japanese society. Nakane (1972) asserts that "the strength of human relations depends on the length and

intensity of contact" (p. 24). In my view, this *intensity of contact* is a key feature of human relationships in Japan. In this paper, human relationships or ningen kankei will be referred to as a *human-relations orientation*.

A concern for the value orientations of others remains a powerful force in Japanese leadership and organizational behavior. According to House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta (2004) in their Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Project (GLOBE) of 62 societies, Japan's ranking of 4.30 on a humane-orientation scale was high in comparison with Western countries such as England (3.72), the USA (4.17), and Australia (4.28). Of note, Canada had a higher humane-orientation score than Japan (4.49). Since this paper focuses on leadership, it is important to provide an example of a human-relations orientation from an eminent Japanese leader.

The founder of Panasonic, the late Konosuke Matsushita, and his focus on a human-relations orientation in the work place is an example of the ethical posture taken by many Japanese leaders. The titles of Matsushita's works are an indication of his humanistic approach towards leadership - for example, *People before products: the human factor in business* (1994) and *Not for bread alone: a business ethos, a management ethic* (1984). Matsushita (1994) stated that "…what you have to do is think of yourself as working with those in your employ, or even better to think of yourself as 'serving' your employees" (p. 36). A proverb that guides many companies in Japan is as follows: *the company exists for the workers* – this is a meta-value or ethic that is highly pervasive throughout the workplace in Japan, specifically the education sector.

Human-Relations Orientation and Educational Leadership

In Japanese education, a concept closely related to the human relations orientation is *kizuna* . Okano and Tsuchiya (1999) assert that a central characteristic of Japanese education is *kizuna*, which refers to "an intimate personal relationship that fosters empathy, characterized by the touching of hearts" (p.173). *Kizuna* is an example of human-relations orientation in education and an essential state of mind that educators are encouraged to cultivate. The development of *kizuna* between teachers and students is an ongoing process that promotes effective classroom management (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). The fostering of *kizuna* may also extend to relationships between a novice and an experienced teacher and between a school leader and his or her teachers. During my teaching experience in Japan, I was surprised by the level of care given to both students and young teachers by experienced Japanese teachers. Despite the fact that I was on a short-term contract in Japan, I had three

experienced teachers take me under their wing and support my development as a teacher in Japan. This was an example of *kizuna-in-action*. At the time, I assumed it was a function of strong leadership at my particular high school, but upon further investigation, I discovered it was in fact an ethical posture common to educators in Japan. The next meta-value, organizational consciousness, has less to do with interpersonal relations and more with finding one's place within a group, organization or for my purposes, a school.

Organizational Consciousness Dantai Ishiki

Omori (2001) describes organizational consciousness (*dantai ishiki*) as the capacity of the individual to understand his or her place in the organization and at the same time focus on promoting the shared goals of the organization. Nakane (1988) asserts that organizational consciousness (OC) strengthens the framework of a group and allows for shared meaning and social investment to occur. OC in Japan is based on what Triandis and Gelfand (1998) refer to as *vertical collectivism*, where an individual understands that he or she is an important part of the group and within the group individual differences are understood.

OC is a highly pervasive meta-value in Japanese education due to the collectivistic nature of society. People strive to locate their position within an organization and gain a sense of the organization and its shared values. In Western societies, there is less attention on one's place within an organization or group and a greater focus on the extent to which one can demonstrate how their individual talents may add to the organization. OC also allows for the development of a collaborative spirit, consensus building, and *relational coordination*, which is discussed in the literature review.

Organizational Consciousness in Educational Leadership

OC may be a contentious term for many like Ralston Saul (2007) who view Japan as a corporate culture where the needs of the individual are sacrificed in the name of efficiency and revenue generation. The term may also elicit images of *groupthink*, where individual opinions are ignored in favor of the needs and ideology of the organization. The Japanese proverb "the nail that sticks up will be hammered down" exemplifies this point. However, I am examining OC from an educational leader's aim to support student learning and growth or what Fullan (2010) refers to as raising the bar on student achievement and closing the gap between high performing and low performing students.

In my opinion, a high degree of OC in a school community may create conditions for sustainable relationships to emerge as members have a greater sense of the shared values and a better understanding of each other's overall contribution to the school community.

OC also has the capacity to allow educators to move beyond an isolated position within a school to an orientation where a greater degree of interaction occurs between educators and the whole school community. It is important to note that OC extends to all aspects of a school community including, students, support staff and educators. OC is consistent with Furman's (2004) conception of the *ethic of community* where "in simplest terms, an ethic of community means that administrators, teachers, school staffs, students, parents, and other community members interested in school commit to the processes of community" (p.222).

Continuous Improvement Kaizen

Continuous improvement or *kaizen* is a Japanese meta-value that permeates organizational life in Japan. Magee (2007) observes that Toyota has made continuous improvement the central organizational imperative and has grown from a small family-owned company to arguably the most successful automobile company in the world. In education, a concrete example of continuous improvement comes in the form of *Jugyo kenshu* or lesson study, which is also called *quality circles* in the literature (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). Teachers' groups take one individual lesson and continually refine it until they have determined it is suitable to present to students (Okano and Tsuchiya, 1999). Western educators are well aware of lesson study and have implemented it with mixed results (Morgan, 2006).

According to the Japanese Human Relations Association (1992), kaizen has joined the worldwide vocabulary along with sushi, karate, zen, etc. Imai (1986) defined kaizen as continuous improvement and noted that a significant difference between kaizen and innovation exists. Innovation refers to the big idea, typically from the executive team, which elicits change within an organization in a top-down manner. Conversely, kaizen might be described as a plethora of small suggestions for improvement from all levels of the organization, including those on the front lines, managers, and executives (Imai, 1986).

The concept of continuous improvement has many skeptics, including those who view it as a top-down directive that is meant to improve the bottom line of the organization. Morgan (2006) asserts that it is challenging to implement the principles of continuous improvement, as it proves difficult to ensure that the strategic and operational dimensions are working in a fluid manner.

Continuous Improvement in Education

To be clear, continuous improvement in Japanese education may be conceptualized as bottom-up refinements driven by individuals and groups on the front line. As noted, lesson study is a specific application of continuous improvement in education.

This form of instructional leadership is generally led by a teacher-leader in Japan. A more general application of continuous improvement in Japanese education is the notion of the *kaizen box* (Japanese Human Relations Association, 1992). The kaizen box is placed in a centrally-located position in the teacher's room or main office. All employees are encouraged to make small suggestions to improve the overall organization. These suggestions are brought to the leadership team to work on the implementation and consensus-building aspects of the suggestion (Japanese Human Relations Association, 1992). The aim is that these refinements improve learning outcomes for students and the school community, through slow and steady refinements starting from the bottom up. On a recent visit to Tokyo, it was striking for me to see a continuous improvement suggestion box (kaizen box) in the staffroom of the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo. According to representatives from the Embassy, it has met with mixed success over the years as the Japanese staff members attempt to introduce the box to their Canadian counterparts who move in and out of the Embassy on a regular basis.

A Relationship Between Meta-Values?

Before proceeding further, I will comment that these three meta-values are connected to a certain extent. I would argue that a human-relationship orientation is the basis for both organizational consciousness and continuous improvement. Once human relationships are attended to, organizational consciousness emerges through focused consensus building. Organizational consciousness then creates the capacity for the more refined and focused continuous improvement to occur since everyone understands their place within the organization and strives to make small improvements. This is a preliminary interpretation of how these meta-values interact on an operational level and in order to verify this claim, it would be necessary to closely examine these meta-values in action at a Japanese school. To be clear, a meta-value is a socially-constructed concept that is highly-valued within a profession; it describes the underlying ethical postures characteristic of particular professions (e.g. *mission* for soldiers; *in the best interests of the student* for educators; *profit, growth, maintenance and survival* for corporations) (P.T. Begley, personal communication, October 31, 2010). In the literature review, a number of themes directly related to the meta-values emerge. The themes are relevant at the organizational level in Begley's (2006) *arenas of influence*. The following section highlights important themes within Japanese leadership practice that Western scholars have identified.

Review of the Literature on Japanese Leadership

Hodgkinson (1991), Sergiovanni (1992), Fullan (2010), Morgan (2006), Gladwell (2008), and Mintzberg (2004) have identified specific aspects of Japanese leadership practice worth further exploration. During the 1980s and 90s the field of business management made a concerted effort to analyze Japanese management techniques (Mouer & Kawanishi, 2005; Morgan, 2006). However, much of this interest subsided when the Japanese asset bubble burst in 1991 (Mouer & Kawanishi, 2005). Scholars in educational leadership have not focused on leadership practice in Japan, but some have taken interest in specific aspects of organizations in Japan. The areas of interest for Hodgkinson (1991), Sergiovanni (1992), Fullan (2010), Morgan (2006), Gladwell (2008), and Mintzberg (2004) include the humanistic orientation; the hierarchical nature of organizations in Japan; the collaborative spirit; consensus building; diligence; and mentorship and on-the-job training. *Figure 2* demonstrates the relationship between the meta-values and the themes that emerge in the literature. The matrix in *Figure 2* presents the meta-values and identifies the associated themes related to the meta-value. The matrix also identifies the scholars who have contributed to the understanding of each theme.

Consensus Building

Hodgkinson (1991) identifies the *individual versus the group* as a contentious issue for educators in a western context. The challenge to ensure all educators within a given school are working towards organizational goals is significant in western culture, which places a strong focus on individual autonomy. Hodgkinson (1991) asserts that the Japanese have solved this challenge to a certain degree by creating *massive consensus* at all levels of the organization. Hodgkinson (1991) observed that Japanese managers and executives spend countless hours developing and implementing consensus-building exercises at all levels, which develops commitment to the organization. This practice is essentially human-relationship development to foster organizational consciousness. Commitment, as Hodgkinson (1991) observes, "…reconciles group versus individual interests" (p. 78). At times, this process is tedious and the time involved in eliciting consensus is significant.

Humanistic Orientation

Hodgkinson visited Japan in the 90s to serve as a distinguished scholar at the Matsushita Business School. The Matsushita Business School is guided by the principles of its founder Konosuke Matsushita (1984,1994). Hodgkinson (personal communication, April 18, 2010) commented that the Japanese believe the West "pays lip service to human relationships." He explained that the Japanese attention to human relationships is vastly different than the Western conception "…because in Japan they actually do it (attend to human relationships)!"

Hierarchical Structure

Hodgkinson (personal communication, April 18, 2010) also noted that the Japanese maintain a rigid hierarchical structure in organizations. Regarding this structure, Morgan (2006) made an insightful comment when he observed that *hierarchy* in a Japanese corporation is as much a system of mutual service as one of top-down control" (p.121). Morgan (2006) commented further and noted that "…in many Western countries individualistic culture leads us to seek and gain self-respect by competing with others or against the wider system. In Japan cultural conditions allow workers to achieve self-respect through service within the system" (p.121). Organizational consciousness allows this to occur because individuals truly understand their place and importance within the system.

Relational Coordination

Sergiovanni (1992) examined the Western propensity towards *trained incapacity* and noted that Western administrators at the school level are prescribed in their roles in such a way that limits their overall ability to complete the job. Trained incapacity may be due to role prescription, societal influence, or the physical structure of an organization. Serigovanni (1992) identifies the example of Japanese shipbuilders

Themes	Human-relations Orientation	Organizational Consciousness	Continuous Improvement	Related Works
Consensus Building		X	X	Matsushita (1982; 1994) Hodgkinson (1991)
Humanistic Orientation	X			Matsushita (1982; 1994) Hodgkinson (1991) House et al. (2004) Okano and Tsuchiya (1999)
Hierarchical Structure		X		Nakane (1973) Hodgkinson (1991) Omori (2001)
Relational Coordination	X	X	X	Sergiovanni (1992) Gittell (2003) Fullan (2010)
Collaborative Spirit	X	X		Morgan (2006) Gladwell (2008) Fullan (2010)
Diligence		X	X	Morgan (2006) Gladwell (2008)
Mentorship	X	X	X	Mintzberg (2004) Howe (2005) Morgan (2006)

Figure 2. Matrix of meta-values and related themes.

as a repair team that works in a fluid manner – they are able to complete tasks efficiently and effectively.

> *A Japanese repair team of engineers, supervisors, and ship workers swarmed all over the damaged ship. Drawings were prepared twenty yards away from the hull and damaged sections removed. No review or signature by higher levels in the engineering department – just a team totally dedicated to the ship (p. 5).*

Sergiovanni (1992) adds that a three-day repair in Japan would take sixty days in the US. A parallel structure is present at the school level where in the west, administrators, and teachers work in separate areas. In Japan, all teachers and vice principals share the same office and are able to work with students directly and share responsibilities for student learning. This is consistent with the shipbuilding example. Japanese shipbuilders and it could be argued educators are able to develop what Fullan (2010) identifies as *relational coordination*, a key area that may support school improvement. Gitell (2003) identifies two companies (Toyota and Southwest Airlines) that focus on ensuring that all employees display *relational coordination* which Gitell (2003) defines as shared goals, shared knowledge, mutual respect, frequent and timely communication, and problem-solving communication. In my opinion, relational coordination may be identified as an example of *organizational consciousness-in-action*.

Collaborative Spirit and Diligence

Morgan (2006) uses Japan as an example of how organization and cultural context are linked. The two key factors that Morgan (2006) explores are diligent performance at work and a collaborative culture that exists between employees in Japanese organizations. Both Morgan (2006) and Gladwell (2008) explain that Japan was able to achieve its remarkable economic growth mainly due to these factors. Morgan (2006) commented that "the collaborative spirit of a village or commune often pervades work experience and there is a considerable emphasis on interdependence, shared concerns, and mutual help" (p.118). The long history of rice farming in Japan is cited as a reason that diligence and collaboration become organizational norms (Morgan, 2006). Gladwell (2008) asserts that, "throughout history, not surprisingly, the people who grow rice have worked harder than almost any other kind of farmer" (p. 233). Rice farming is a labor-intensive endeavor that requires teamwork and close monitoring. In order to succeed each successive season, the Japanese always needed to work together to ensure the rice field yielded enough food for the village.

Mentorship

Mintzberg (2004) suggests that Japan and the United States sit at opposite ends of the management-development spectrum. The fundamental difference is that the Japanese rely almost exclusively on systematic training provided by the employer while the United States relies on outside courses, workshops and credentials as granted by universities (Mintzberg, 2004). On-the-job training in Japan continues be a responsibility that all employers take seriously. It is not uncommon for employees entering a new company to spend six-months in a paid internship position prior to commencing employment. Management training is accomplished primarily through mentoring and observation (Mintzberg, 2004). Mintzberg (2004) believes that in Japan "moving, mentoring, and monitoring remain the most common form of management development today" (p.206). Morgan (2006) also notes that the Japanese approach these key developmental approaches with perhaps more commitment than any other country in the world. Similarly, Howe (2005) asserts that the two main components of successful induction into the teaching profession in Japan are *kenshu* (study) and *shido* (guidance). Japanese teacher-training programs are designed to promote mentorship opportunities for teachers. Howe (2005) explains that newly appointed full-time teachers receive 20 to 30 days of intensive training and guidance from master teachers at prefectural education centers during their first year. This is in stark contrast to the sink or swim orientation that characterizes the experience of many first year Canadian teachers.

Conclusion

After an examination of three meta-values in Japanese education and a review of the literature, several consistent themes emerge including: a humanistic orientation, hierarchy, a collaborative spirit, relational coordination, consensus building, diligence, and mentorship. It is important to note that that these themes have evolved over hundreds of years as a result of meta-values culturally situated in Japan. These specific themes make unique contributions to educational leadership in Japan and may be useful for academics, policy makers and educators outside of Japan to observe and study. In the same vein, it is worthwhile to consider the changing nature of societies in our globalized world and how the study of meta-values (in a cross-cultural sense) may ease this transition. Begley (2010a) states that value conflicts in the cultural domain are becoming more frequent due to increasing diversity in western society and the world in general. Many of these conflicts occur at schools and therefore school leaders must be cognizant of this trend and have the capacity to understand the cross-cultural value conflicts and respond appropriately. The study of meta-values and associated themes that are separate and distinct from one's own may serve as a sophisticated method of understanding and thus add to an educational

leader's capacity to understand the valuation processes of others; one key component in Begley's (2010b) conception of authentic leadership.

A global examination of meta-values in education may also be a means to expose the field of educational leadership to new conceptions of leadership. By analyzing meta-values and corresponding themes that hold influence in a given societal culture, a greater understanding of sustainable leadership practices may come to fruition. Moreover, the categorization of meta-values in educational leadership may add to Dimmock and Walker's (2000, 2005) cross-cultural framework in educational leadership.

It should be noted that Japanese leadership practices are not a panacea for correcting or aiding leadership development in the West as all the areas under discussion are in Bruner's (1999) view *culturally situated*. The direct application of a purely Japanese leadership practice will likely fail when situated without a consideration of societal culture. The impact of societal culture on school leadership remains contentious and requires greater attention. Walker and Shuangye (2007) assert "the influence of cultural values on leadership and organization behavior is a complex issue, one which has not been, and probably never will be resolved" (p.189). It would be difficult to replicate the manner in which organizations perform in Japan, yet understanding the meta-values and corresponding themes is a starting point for promoting sustainability in relationships in one's own context.

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