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運用「佛教系統方法論(BSM)」解決組織文化之問題—以
越南企業 Le Group of Companies 為案例

By Using “Buddhist Systems Methodology (BSM)” to Deal
with Organizational Culture Problems: A Case Study in
Vietnam Business Enterprise (Le Group of Companies)

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MBA Recommendation Letter

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1. In terms of studies, Luong Tien Hiep has acquired 36 credits, passed all of the obligatory subjects such as Managerial Economics, Seminar on Business Ethics, Topics in Strategic Management, Research Methods etc. (Please refer to transcript.)
2. In terms of theses, Luong Tien Hiep has completed the following:
 - i. Master thesis : By Using “Buddhist Systems Methodology (BSM)” to Deal with Organizational Culture Problems – A Case study in Vietnam Business Enterprise (Le Group of Companies)
 - ii. Journal :

I believe that Luong Tien Hiep has already received full formative education of NHU Master Program for Business Management and is qualified to apply for Master’s Degree Examination. Therefore, I hereby recommend his preliminary paper, By Using “Buddhist Systems Methodology (BSM)” to Deal with Organizational Culture Problems – A Case study in Vietnam Business Enterprise (Le Group of Companies), for the oral defense.

Academic Advisor:



Date: 2019/12/12

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南華大學管理學院企業管理學系管理科學碩士班

108 學年度第 1 學期碩士論文摘要

論文題目：運用「佛教系統方法論（BSM）」解決組織文化之問題－以越南企業 Le Group of Companies 為案例

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論文摘要內容：

這項研究旨在通過 Le Group of Companies，這是諮詢品牌戰略，公共關係方面的領先組織之一，以不同角度處理組織文化問題。該研究是基於使用佛教系統方法論（BSM）發起的，這是一種將東方佛教哲學與西方系統思想相結合的問題解決方法。通過系統理論的觀察，深入訪談等方法的綜合分析，發現了領導問題，可以通過改進領導能力來促進組織發展。該研究揭示了系統思維和佛教思維在組織中的好處，包括對越南商業企業領導力發展的影響，此外，該研究還提出了有關解決組織文化問題的建議。

關鍵詞：佛教系統方法論、組織文化、系統思維、領導力、越南商

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to deal with the organizational culture problems through different lens of various positions in Le Group of Companies, one of the leading organizations in consulting brand strategy, public relations. The research was initiated based on using Buddhist Systems Methodology (BSM), which is a problem dealing approach combined Eastern Buddhist philosophy with Western Systems thinking. According to the analysis and synthesis of the systems theory with methods such as observation, in-depth interviews, the Study found out a leadership problem, which can be improved to boost the organization development. The Study discloses the benefits of Systems thinking and Buddhist thinking in organization includes implication for the development of leadership of a Vietnam Business Enterprise, and furthermore, the Study also suggests a recommendation systematically about solving organizational culture problems.

Keywords: Buddhist Systems Methodology, Organizational Culture, Systems Thinking, Leadership, Vietnam Business

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background and Research Motivation

In this rapidly growing and changing world, business leaders should have a concept of systems thinking to understand and deal with complex problems, especially the complexity caused by organizational cultures. Vietnam is one of the Asian countries which was influenced by Buddhism culture; therefore, the relevance of systems thinking and Buddhist thinking as a competence was disclosed in the context of leadership in Vietnam.

In globalization era, Vietnam business enterprises have significant growth. Many indexes illustrate for this growth. According to the International monetary fund report (2018), Vietnam's GDP growth reached 7.08%, which is the highest figure over the decade. However, many leaders in Vietnam are not good at practical management skills (according to the World Economic Forum, 2018), which requires the top managers, middle managers need to equip a new professional approach such as systems methodologies. In Western companies, systems thinking helps leaders to gain more significant achievements through seeing the big picture and understanding the correlation between internal and external factors (Bruni, 2018).

Besides, sustainable growth and ethics in business is a primary target in the global economy, including Vietnam. Nguyen & Mujtaba (2013) stated that ethics is one of vital pillar of sustainable growth with positive influence. In this situation, many Vietnam enterprises have endeavored to balance between ethical and practical problems, which means they try to achieve the benefit and also protect

the mutual interests of society. As a country with a culture influenced by Buddhism from Chinese and India, Vietnam could apply the Buddhist approach into solving complex problems relating to sustainable development (Thich, 2019).

Vietnam culture is influenced by Buddhism, which religion roots into the history of Vietnam. According to Nguyen (2004), there have a Buddhism with 2500 years of tradition as fundamental of many fields in Vietnamese society. According to Nguyen (1993), Lý Dynasty (1010-1226) is the prosperous era of Vietnam Buddhism; therefore, Lý Emperors built pagodas in the whole country with a total number of more than 1000 pagodas. Buddhists played a vital role in society, and consulted to Emperors in decision-making. As a result, Buddhism impacted on the way of management in politics, economics, and culture until now. According to the Vietnam Government Committee of Religious Affair (2009), Buddhism is the religion that has the biggest followers in Vietnam, official 14.91% of the Vietnamese population is Buddhism's followers. Moreover, Buddhist theory of organizational leadership offers significant insights into many levels from individuals, group to organizational level (Kriger and Dhiman, 2018). Religion has a significant influence on the relationship with leadership behavior (Fernando & Jackson, 2006; Modaff, 2012), and Rarick (2007) reported that religion played an essential role in the decision making of managers. To determine the effects of Buddhist into management, Surasak (2018) also demonstrated about the application of Buddhist leadership in fostering organizational governance.

1.2 Research Purpose

From above research background and research motivations, this research conducts research questions, collects data by individual in-depth interviews from top leaders, middle managers, and employees working in a Vietnam business

enterprise, particularly in Hanoi. The main objectives of this Study are to investigate the organizational culture problems in the context of a Vietnam business enterprise and the application of systems thinking into dealing with those problems, provides to leaders, managers in Vietnam a new approach to tackle the organizational issues in the longterm. In the context of Vietnam, which is a country influenced by Buddhism, applying Buddhist Systems Methodology could be a better approach to harmonize the organizational culture and foster leadership of Vietnam leaders.

1.3 The Procedure and Research Structure

The Study examines the organizational culture problems of a Vietnam Business Enterprise. Firstly, the research proposed theoretical backgrounds and motivation of the Study, the review about Vietnam corporate culture, systems methodology approaches. Secondly, the Study points out the conceptual framework of a system methodology, using a qualitative research method to conduct research questions, collect data through in-depth interviews, and analyze to get conclusions. The research process is described in Figure 1.1 as below:

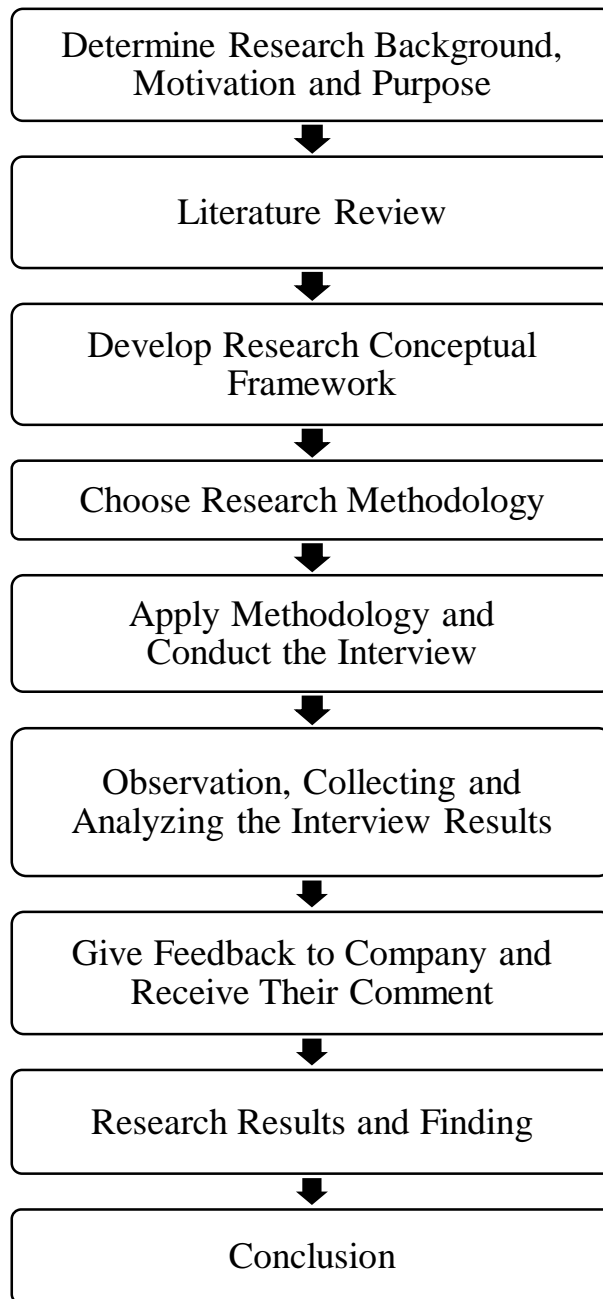


Figure 1.1 Research Process

Source: Original Study

This research structure includes six major parts: Introduction, Literature Review, Research Methodology, Fieldwork , Result & Finding, Conclusion.

Chapter One will introduce the background of the research, also the motivation to investigate this Study and the purpose, question, contribution. Additionally, it points out the research flow and general structure of Study.

Chapter Two demonstrates the definitions of research-related factors like organizational culture, systems thinking, and systems methodologies, organizational leadership. From reviewing and discussing the previous studies and essential features of each part, the overall about Vietnam corporate culture and application of systems methodologies would be built up.

Chapter Three presents the research methodology. In this chapter, research questions are conducted. The chosen method to investigate the case Study, sample, and data collection are defined. Moreover, the methodology used for analyzing data is also discussed in chapter three.

Chapter Four is the presentation of fieldwork with steps in the process of in-depth interviews, collecting the feedbacks from people in the company.

Chapter Five is analyzing the data from interviews, showing the findings, also discussing the implication and limitation of the research.

Chapter Six concludes the case Study and propose some suggestions as well as doing further research in the future.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Review of Previous Research about Vietnam

Organizational Culture

2.1.1 Introduction of Vietnam Culture

Vietnam Culture is diverse, embedded with both Eastern and Western culture due to the presence of China, France and America in the country. In the past, Vietnam was controlled and overshadowed by Chinese dynasties for more than a thousand years (Thananan, 2015), therefore Vietnam culture has been strongly influenced by culture and religious beliefs from China. Among the Asian cultural roots, the Buddhist philosophical beliefs and the Confucian have strong impact on Vietnamese cultural values (Kelley, 2006). Besides, Vietnam history witnessed a century of French colonization and three decades under the invasion of the US invader (Nguyen, 1985) exposed the country to Western values.

Many literatures have determine the definitions of national culture as intellectual assets which is local knowledge and performativity (or applied skills) for society's benefit. Triandis (1972) defines national culture as standard descriptions, mentioning 'shared values', while Hofstede, (1997) stated that culture of a nation is the collective programming of the mind acquired by growing up in a particular country.

Regarding the impact of religions, , Buddhism has a significant influence in Vietnam culture (Nguyen, 1993). According to Nguyen (2004), Buddhism was introduced by monastics and laypeople to Vietnam in the third century BCE, but

its maturity was achieved by the end of the second century CE with the famous Luy Lâu Buddhist center. After its establishment, it co-existed with Confucianism, Taoism and other indigenous traditions in Vietnam. With such fusion of numerous religions and philosophies, Vietnam culture, as with other East Asian nations, emphasizes power distance, paternalism, collectivism and social relations (Hofstede, 2004). Therefore, certain Western models are not applicable in such context.

2.1.2 The Situation of Vietnam Organizational Culture

Since the renovation in 1986, Vietnam has witnessed constant changes economically, culturally and politically. Notably, its participation in the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2006 has brought about both opportunities and challenges to the country. Consequently, such changes was found to have significant impact on Vietnam and its organizational culture since they challenges the conventional values and beliefs that have been embedded in the culture for centuries (Cunha & Cooper, 1998; Nguyen & Graeme, 2008). In post-modernity solid traditional culture and society are dissolving under the pressure of at least four critical changes: the influence of globalization, the return to a market economy in which knowledge seems to play a creative role, the burden of growing population, and the depletion of the natural environment (Nguyen & Johanson, 2006).

2.1.3 Problematic Factors affecting to Vietnam Organizational Culture

According to Hofstede's (2011), characteristics of Vietnam culture are high collectivism, large power distance, moderate uncertainty avoidance, moderate masculinity, moderate long-term orientation explains the situation of Vietnam

business culture. According to Ralston, Nguyen, and Napier (1999), managers in Vietnam have perception with higher collectivism than in China and U.S. Besides, Vietnamese people lean to work in harmony, they prioritize the group goals instead of individual ones.

According to Nguyen (2015), Vietnam enterprises should develop their own business culture and benefit from it due to its influence on managerial effectiveness. According to Tran (2016), state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in Vietnam need to adapt their business approaches to a global economy. Thereby, it requires changes from Vietnamese business leaders and leadership to not only improve the professional tools in management and but also base on Asian cultural foundation.

According Do (2015), this research evaluated corporate culture of SMEs in Vietnam and found out problematic factors affecting to business culture including strategic thinking of leadership, creative ability of employees, organizational innovation.

2.1.4 Introduction of Organizational Culture Approaches and Its Weakness to Deal with Vietnam Organizational Culture

Many Western researchers have characterized culture in many definitions. Cultures have been defined by many lenses as “beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols, and traditions that are common to a group of people” (Northouse, 2007, p.302), Trompenaars & Turner (2012) introduced the culture as how a group of people solves problems and conforms dilemmas. Therefore, learning in an organization is also defined in varied ways. Sun (2008) considered organizational culture as a whole system of shared values and beliefs. Those values will impact

to interaction within whole structure of company. It is obviously saw that organizational culture is the result of the corporate members who create it through a set of actions (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Taylor & Van (2000, p.302) stated: “when new members join the organization, current members use these stories and myths to explain the job and the organization”. With these definitions, the core characteristics of organizational culture are linked strongly with previous and current organizational members. Since every organization has a unique culture, culture plays a role as a common language of organization. Schein (1999), Daft (2006) defined organizational culture by added more behavioral norms with gathering beliefs, values, sharing ways of thinking between members of organization and teaching to new members as the right things. This is the feelings and understanding of the team members and expressed in the organization. According to Mullins (1999), providing a common platform for everything people do and think in an organization from a set of values, traditions, policies, beliefs, and attitudes is a definition of organizational culture.

The typical organizational culture approaches focus on the components which construct the culture in the corporation. One prominent method is research from Schein (1990) as a view many managers accepted. According to this researcher, organizational culture is the sets of artifacts, values, and assumptions that emerge from the interactions of organizational members; organizational culture are proposed to understand with three levels, includes artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. Artifacts can be described as visible organizational structures and processes that can be hard to analyze; Espoused Beliefs and Values can be understood as basic assumptions like strategies, goals, philosophies of business; and the deepest level is underlying assumptions which

are unconscious, beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. Schein's approach is useful to understand the organizational culture through psychological individuals' lens. Currently, maintaining a comfortable workplace can be important to boost the job satisfaction of employees. Wiener & Vardi (1990) introduced culture as a system of shared values which produce normative pressures on members of the organization. The level of congruence between an organization's culture and employees' value preferences can predict job satisfaction and turnover (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Calwell, 1991). Gordon & Tommaso (1992) consider corporate culture to be the pattern of shared and firm beliefs and values that are developed within a company across time, and Loi & Ngo (2008) claim that the organizational culture reflects the vision of a firm.

Discussing about organizational effectiveness, Competing Values Framework (CFV), according to Quinn and Kimberly (1985), could discover the deep levels of organizational culture, the basic assumptions are compliance, motives, leadership, decision making, effectiveness, values, and organizational forms. Deshpande (1993) stated that the culture types of this framework are modal or dominants types. It is the basis for the four organizational culture types of Cameron and Freeman (1991), which has the characteristics are very similar to the types in CFV. Cameron & Freeman (1991) defined four types of cultures includes: clan, hierarchy, adhocracy, and market. Table 1 below describes the four culture types of Cameron and Freeman (1991) are connected with the culture types of the competing values framework of Quinn and colleagues on the basis of available characteristics of each culture.

Table 2.1 The Four Culture Types

Culture type	Competing Values Framework
Clan Culture	Human relations model (group culture)
Hierarchy Culture	Internal process model (hierarchical culture)
Adhocracy Culture	Open system model (development culture)
Market Culture	Rational goal model (rational culture)

Source: Cameron and Freeman (1991)

Table 2.1 provides to the leaders the overall picture with some types of culture and help them to understand about the competent model which need to be matched with the culture types. The benefits of organizational culture in corporate performance and leadership performance are perceived by many managers. Mannion (2009) and Scott (2006) claimed that the understanding of the concepts of organizational culture and organizational performance are important into reorganizing of sustainable organization. Many studies have examined the relationship between the organization culture and corporate performance in sharing core values. The research conducted by Barney (1986) claimed that the core values (such as the way to treat employees, customers, suppliers,...) encourage openness and flexibility in organization. As suggested by Bernard and Charles (1987), culture is just one of the many variables that could contribute to explaining performance.

Regarding organizational leadership, many studies find out the definition of

leadership and demonstrate the importance of leadership in the organization. According to Andersen (2017), leaders are people who can foster the motivation of their staffs to achieve success and passion in their work. Crawford and Lok (2004) stated that the leadership factor could predict an organization assumed to succeed or fail. Therefore, leadership style can affect the organization in many ways. Understanding leadership style can be useful in the adapt the suitable method to boost the effectiveness of management (Rukmani, 2010). Miller (2002) defined leadership styles is a pattern of interaction between leaders and subordinates. There are many styles of leadership, but commonly researchers focus on two typical forms: Transformational leadership and transactional leadership. Transactional and transformation leadership style are the popular styles of organizational leadership, while the world in globalization no longer accepts using power as a form of leadership (Rees & French, 2013). Transformational leadership refers to the process of the inspiring motivation of leaders' self and their follower (Burns, 1978), and this leadership style has four components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1997). Many kinds of research have emphasized the benefits of transformational leadership. Behery (2008) said that in an organization using a transformational leadership style, the mutual understanding among employees is better. In 2011, Chu and Lai reported that leaders who applied transformational techniques in leadership could help their employees more innovative; also transformational leadership empowers and motivate the subordinates to achieve goals beyond their responsibility (Kark & Israel, 2004). While transactional leadership has been defined as a leader has much power over their followers and force them to abide by the leader's decision (Lyons & Schneider, 2009). In 2004, Bass and Avolio pointed out that transactional

leadership includes three components: passive management by exception, contingent reward, and active management by exception. Transaction or exchange is significant characteristics for this kind of leadership style. In an organization, transactional leadership is a relationship basing on following leaders and exchanging their abilities to rewards (Ali, 2013). Leaders in this style motivate their employees not by inspiration like transformational leadership, but by appropriate rewards (Pearce & Sims, 2002). There have some researches in Asia, which indicates that the leadership concepts from Western can be complex when they are applied in Asia countries. In 2012, Jogulu and Ferkins conducted research to understand the extensive application of transformational and transactional leadership in Asian culture. They found that leadership can be affected by cultural factors in the context of an Asian country and suggested that cultural foundations may accordingly determine the choice of leadership style.

Many scholars demonstrate that there is a strong connection between organizational culture and leadership. Schein (2010) claimed that “organizational cultures are created by leaders and one of the most decisive functions of leadership may well be the creation, the management, and when that may become necessary – the destruction of culture”. Porter and Nohria (2010) pointed out that executive leadership is the primary shaper and builder of organizational culture. Kouzes and Posner (2012) concluded that the importance of leadership in conducting the organization’s culture and values from one generation to the next, as well as from leaders to employees.

In order to understand organizational culture within the context of country, Hofstede (2010) sees the culture as the collective programming of the mind which determines the members of one category of people from another. This includes

shared beliefs, values and practice that differentiate one organization from the others. The organization culture is measured by Hofstede through qualitative and quantitative method from the following four hierarchies: value, ceremony, hero and symbols. Based on dimensions of national culture, Hofstede (2010) also divided corporate cultures into two national dimensions: uncertainty and power distance, thus, there are four types: the pyramid, the machine, the family and the village market; and Hofstede's researches contributed to understand the national culture including Vietnam. However, previous approaches are shortcoming to deal with Vietnam organizational culture problems. Most of approaches came from Western studies. Shuang, Ngan and Ying (2014) found that the western model of leadership competencies at the various management levels could not match with the needs of managers in China and Vietnam. Nham (2016) pointed out in Vietnam context "organizational culture is an important yet complex notion that every organization should pay close attention". Therefore, this situation requires a holistic approach to deal with these complex problems.

2.1.5 Summary

Vietnam is a country with rich culture because its culture is influenced by many beliefs and values from China, as well as Western countries like France, America. Vietnam's architecture and its people's behavior, language and traditions throughout Vietnam history with the domination of Chinese dynasties, French colonization (1858-1954) and the invading of the US imperialist aggressors in the south clearly demonstrates that these invasions added many features to the traditional Vietnamese cultural values. Those factors brought about the complexity in Vietnam Organizational Culture, especially because of diverse contexts such as multiple religions (Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism,

Catholicism...). Besides, in Vietnam culture, Buddhism has been considered as strong influence in the Asia context including Vietnam, and it could be linked to Vietnam organizational culture. Therefore, many previous organizational culture approaches cannot deal with Vietnam organizational culture problem, could not match with the needs of managers in Vietnam.

Schein (2011) explained about culture beginning and the impact of founders as leaders with some basic sources: the beliefs, values, and assumptions of founders of organizations; the learning experiences of group members as their organization evolves; and new beliefs, values, and assumptions brought in by new members and leaders. Therefore, managing culture stems from understanding the differences in thinking of various levels in an organization. In order to deal with complex problem of Vietnam organizational culture, Vietnam leaders need to find and apply a new holistic approach from systems methodologies.

2.2 The Review of Systems Thinking

2.2.1 Introduction of Systems Thinking

In an age of uncertainty, there has been an increased interest within the field for introducing systems thinking concepts. This is the reason why it can be found many definitions about systems thinking over the periods. Firstly, Systems thinking focus about the interrelationship within a system. Sterman (2000) stated that systems thinking emphasizes the relationships among a system's elements rather than the parts independently. Because of emphasizing the connection between many parts of system, systems thinking can collect the information to improve decision quality (Bakhshi, Ireland and Gorod, 2016). Moreover, in the century of complexity, systems approaches could be useful for management in minimizing the conflict of organization. Therefore, "the controlling ability/degree

of conformance can act as a moderator to mitigate conflicts common in collaborative environments (Jemielniak, 2016) and “both control and flexibility are optimized through nuanced management approaches” (Darabi, Mansouri and Gorod, 2013). In order to managing complexity and addressing doubtfulness, hidden supposition and mental models, Senge (2006) declared that systems thinking can be a scientific methodology to tailor these situations. It is useful for decision makers to understand and forecast the long term effects of decisions, actions, policies and strategies (Sterman, 2000). Maani and Cavana (2007) showed that systems thinking discloses the complexity through four correlated levels of thinking. including events, patterns, systems structures, and mental models. To understand the deep insights of people, four levels of thinking should be discovered. Systems thinking also is an approach to understanding the big picture. Arnold, Ross, & Wade (2015) mentioned that “Systems thinking is a system of thinking about systems”, with this approach, individuals, organizations and researchers can apply systems thinking for seeing the forest and understanding not only about parts of a system but also the other interrelated systems. In the systems thinking lens, managers can have the information widely and see the big picture with the all interactions and relationships. In 1950, systems theory by Ludwig von Bertalanffy about “Close systems and open systems” concluded that a closed system can be autonomic and do not transfer with the outside environment, while an open system interacts and maintain its operation, therefore, an open system can be extended its boundary and develop for adapting with new conditions of the environment, and it can make the system of organization is more sustainable. Bosch, Maani, and Smith (2007) concluded that systems thinking is an approach with a set of principles and appliances to deal with complexity underlying our macro environment such as social, economic, ecological and political challenges.

Following Maani and Cavana (2007), Systems Thinking includes several factors, which can support managers to governance, are dynamic thinking, operational thinking, closed-loop thinking and seeing the big picture. These can lead to a result that a system is not only impacted by inner parts of system but also the outside parts. Bosch (2007) viewed systematic thinking as a new way of thinking to understand and manage the natural and human systems associated with complex problems.

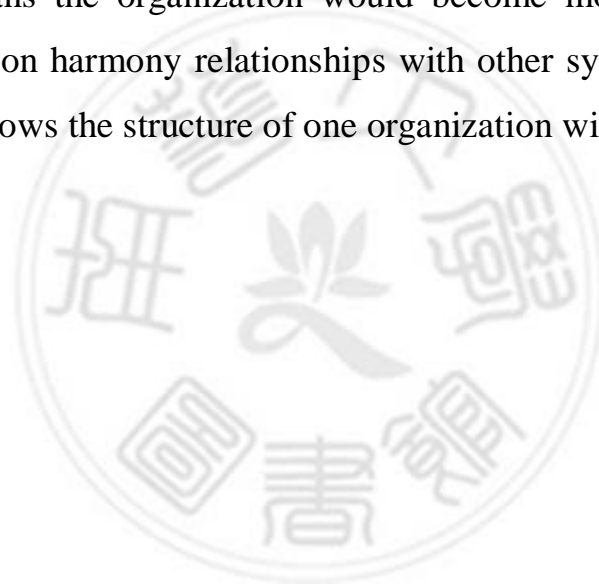
2.2.2 Systems Thinking Approaches

2.2.2.1 Hard Systems Thinking

The approaches in Hard Systems Thinking (HST) generally linked to operational research, systems analysis and systems engineering. Purpose of this methodology is achieving the objective through optimizing the performance of a system. Hard system methodology (HST) was invented by Checkland (1981) when this researcher recognized similarities between the approaches Operational Research (OR), Systems Analysis (SA) and Systems Engineering (SE). Quade and Miser (1985) stated that the main goal of systems analysis is supporting various sectors from policy makers to individual into solve the problems in their works.

Organizational Cybernetics (OC) is one of the systems approaches which deriving from the cybernetics created by Wiener (1948), applies the principles associated with “Communication and Control” from cybernetics to organizations. OC was developed from both a theoretical and methodological point of view by Stafford Beer (1979, 1981 and 1985). Cybernetics was originally defined as the science of control and communication in the machine. However, many scholars pointed out that cybernetics can be applied into management. According to Beer

(1985), the cybernetic concepts of black box, negative feedback and variety, which are helpful for managers to understand their organizations and improve complex systems. Beer (1985) proposed viable systems model to help leaders understand further the principles of viability underpinning the behavior of complex organization. The viable systems approach considers a system as viable when it is able to be flexible for balancing both internally and externally (Golinelli, 2010). From this perspective, leaders and managers could focus on the effective mechanisms for growth, learning, development and adaptation of the viable system, which means the organization would become more strong within its environment based on harmony relationships with other systems (Barile, 2014). Figure 2.1 below shows the structure of one organization with VSM :



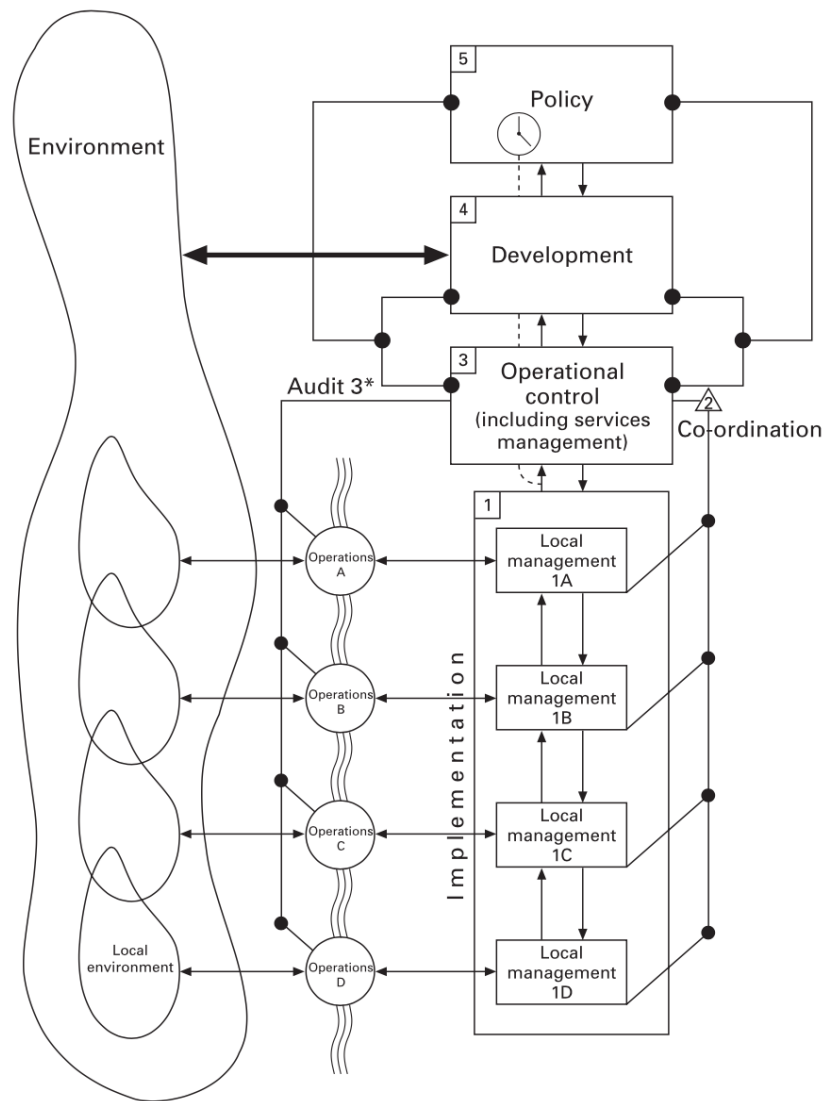


Figure 2.1 The Viable Systems Model

Source: Adapted from Beer (1985)

Figure 2.1 shows the VSM with many correlated parts (Policy, Development, Operational Control, Local Management and Environment) for organizing an effective structure. According to Jackson (2006), hard systems methodology like VSM has some useful application to managers. Firstly, HST can support managers to deal with a set of the operational problems by the wider view.

Therefore, in tackling real problems, HST can help managers to achieve comprehensive and integrated solutions. Jackson (2006) also concluded that HST could be helpful in seeking to improve problem situations, ensure efficiency of organization with establishing clearly objectives. HST helps managers improve problem situations with condition they set objectives clearly, but this methodology is useless if manager want to determine elements contribute to problem, it is also not helpful in identifying the interactions and influence of these elements. This methodology is useful in operational problems situation; but in reality, most of problems is complex and most of organizations have many different goals from diverse opinions. In the 1970s and 1980s, many practitioners used HST approach to deal with problem situations in the context of complexity and change, however, HST also has limitations in determining the root of problems, which lead to develop another approach in the next period with Soft Systems Thinking.

2.2.2.2 Soft Systems Thinking

Soft Systems Methodology (SST) was developed from systems engineering approaches by Checkland (1999). When problems of organization become more complex, change constantly and more diversity, systems thinkers suggested to leaders in organization a new methodology in order to determine the root definitions. Figure 2.4 describes soft systems methodology which provides a framework for tackling such situations in 7 stages:

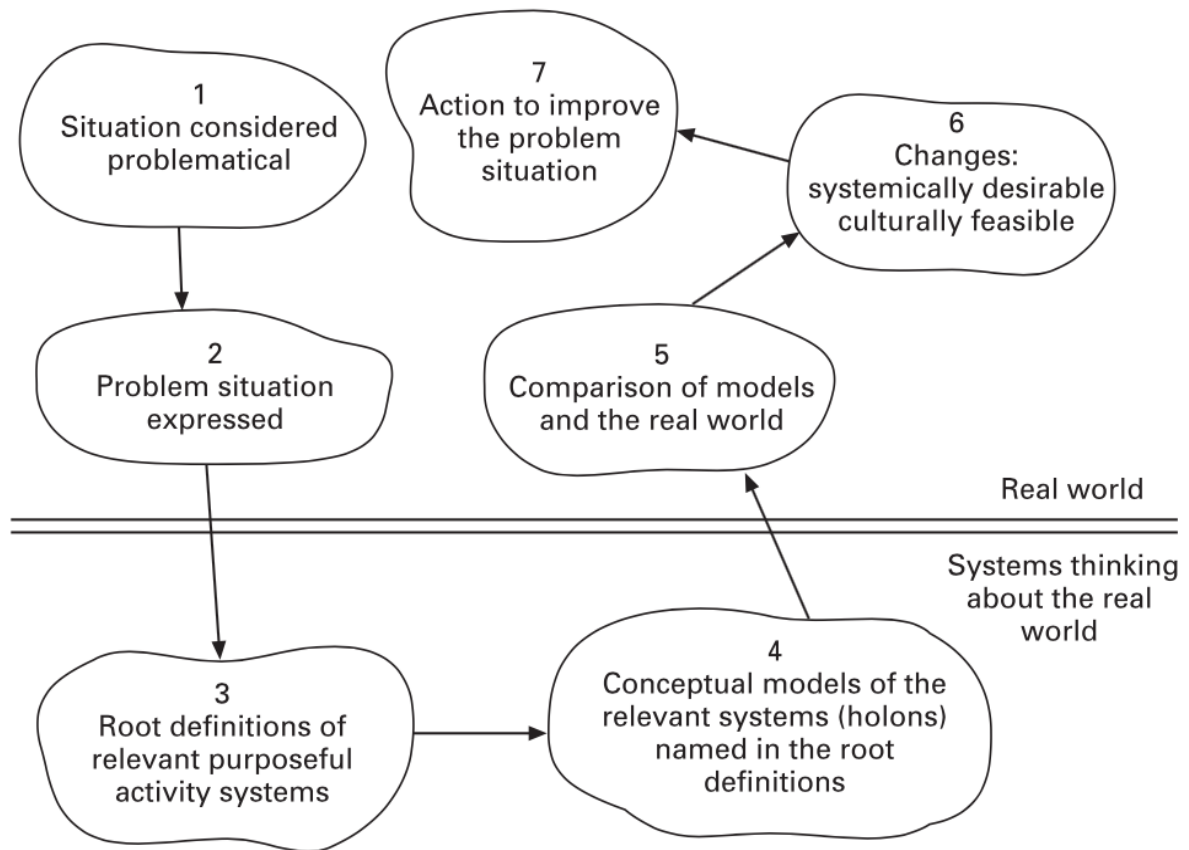


Figure 2.2 Checkland's Seven-Stage Soft Systems Methodology

Source: Adapted from Checkland (1999)

Figure 2.2 showed that Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) does not require managers to establish set of clear goals before resolving problems. Moreover, SSM helps managers find out a problem situation including culture and politics (These Factors That HST Cannot Analyze) and remedy the situation of organizations. SSM proposes process of seven stages to solve the problem:

- Stage 1: Enter situation considered problematical
- Stage 2: Illustrating the problem situation.
- Stage 3: Determining root definitions of related systems.
- Stage 4: Determining conceptual models.

- Stage 5: Comparing conceptual models with the real world.
- Stage 6: Analyzing practical change.
- Stage 7: Having action plan to improve the problem situation

2.2.2.3 Critical Systems Thinking

According to Midgley (2012), Critical Systems Thinking (CST) is organizing commitments are principles or value propositions that have endured even if likely to remain 'themes for debate'. Midgley (1995) stated that CST embraces three fundamental commitments including critical awareness, emancipation, and methodological pluralism. Ulrich & Reynolds (2010) developed the boundary critique, which is a framework for meditative practice on boundaries and methodology of CST. Haraway (2015) said that systems are considered as an output of the mind and it could be produced through various explanation by human and non-human agencies performing within a dynamic reality, constantly rebuilding and transforming knowledge systems. According to Huang and Wang (2003), CST deals with technical, sensible and emancipatory human interests. The main features of CST include five major commitments (Schechter, 1991): seeks to demonstrate critical awareness, shows social perception, dedicated to human emancipation, committed to the interdependent and notified use of systems methodologies in practice. While social awareness comes from considering the results of practice chosen methodologies on teams who have interests within the systems, and by recognizing the political pressures which may impact on boundary methodologies. Complementarism at the methodological level is related to commitment to the complementary smart use of systems methodologies. In these commitments, Huang and Wang (2003) noted that critical awareness arises in two ways: Firstly, by closing examination of the belief and values underpinning

systems styles; secondly, by examining the strengths, weaknesses and theoretical bases of systems approaches. The critical systems endeavor possesses perhaps three interrelated intentions:

- Complementarism: to expose and critique the theoretical and methodological foundation of systems approaches, and to reflect upon the problem situations
- Emancipation: to develop systems thinking and practice beyond its present conservative limitations and formulate new methodologies to tackle problem situations
- Critical reflection: to reflect upon the relationships between different organizational, social interests and the influence of different systems theories and methodologies.

Adapted systemic intervention methodology, in the context of Asian organizations, Shen (2007) invented Buddhist Systems Methodology (BSM) which is a combined Buddhist concept and critical systems thinking. BSM is developed basing on a synthesis of Buddhist concepts and systemic intervention methodology. In the culture of some Asian countries, BSM could be a appropriate approach to deal with complex problems, especially in countries influenced by Buddhism.

2.2.2.4 Summary

Systems Thinking has the application in many diverse fields, especially business (Sterman, 2000), environmental conflict management (Elias, 2008), organizational learning and change management (Maani & Fan, 2008). Previous researches illustrates that systems thinking is a holistic approach to support managers in organizations for improving the efficiency, promote mutual

understanding between managers, stakeholders, employees, achieve the financial goals, optimize work performance of employees and create a unique organizational culture in order to be willing to face to changes of environment.

In context of Vietnam, there are few researches about systems thinking and its applications. Some of them have just focused on sustainable tourism development (Mai & Bosch, 2007), coffee export industry (Thich, Nam & Bosch, 2015), agriculture (Mai & To, 2015). My research contributes a case Study of organizational culture in a Vietnamese business enterprise with application of a critical systems methodology. To deal with Vietnam Organizational Culture problems which is complex and influenced by multiple-factors, Critical Systems Thinking is a promising approach to managers and leaders in Vietnam.

Besides, Vietnam organizations has many conditions to apply Buddhism Systems Methodology (BSM). According to Mark (2019) discussed that in many countries of Asia, Buddhist economics is part of the debate on sustainable development, and some states like Thailand are applying Buddhist thinking into solving complex management problems. Many scholars indicate the application of Buddhist concepts. According to Dhiman and Marques (2011), Buddhist thinking helps in cherishing the spirit and having a more holistic view of the world. The 2,500 years old Buddhist tradition has been developed with a sustainable foundation (Johansen & Gopalakrishna, 2006) may be particularly useful in decision making using that practical wisdom. Buddhist wisdom also contributes to management development in business ethics or improving business performance. Specifically, “Buddhist wisdom emphasizes the importance of managers being aware of the processes in their mind, both rational and emotional, of their minds being clear, calm and concentrated and not being influenced by

negative emotions such as excessive self-interest, and of being motivated to do their best for the company a whole and all of its stakeholders.” (Laurens, 2014). In 2014, Priyanka suggested the potential ways of exploring, implementing, and supporting practical wisdom from Buddhist thinking in work environments in Asian countries which have rich eastern traditions. The Study of Ann Marie (2006) explored the application of Buddhism into the successful way of a Vietnamese entrepreneur in her organization, which demonstrates the influence of Buddhism in Vietnam organizations.

2.3 The Introduction of Buddhist Systems Methodology (BSM)

Buddhist Systems Methodology (BSM) is a combined Buddhist concept and systems thinking. Shen (2007) developed the BSM basing on a synthesis of Buddhist concepts and systemic intervention methodology. Therefore, BSM consists of two-models structures: systemic intervention approach (figure 2.3) adapted from Midgley (2000) and five concepts in Buddhism including noble eightfold path, middle path, cause–condition–effect, space (context) and time (figure 2.4)

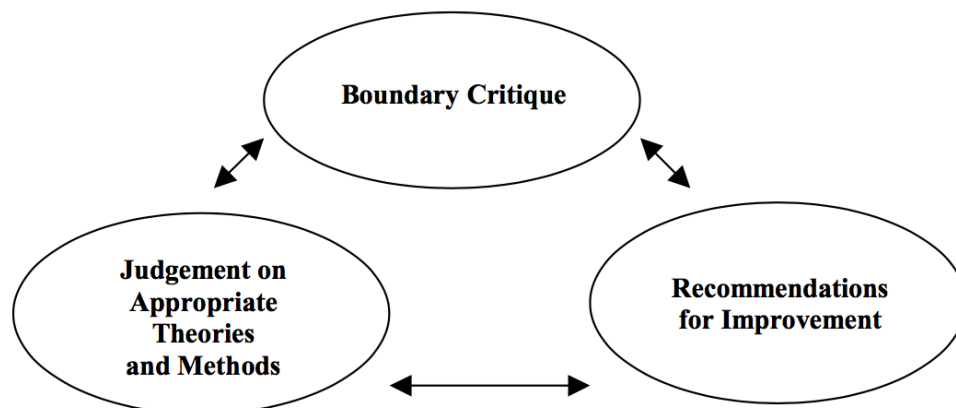


Figure 2.3 The Essence of Systemic Intervention

Source: adapted from Midgley (2000)

The essence of systemic intervention in figure 2.3 has three main parts:

- Boundary critique which means helping people increase the awareness about problematic situations and consider many consequences in solving the problem.
- Choice between theories and methods
- Recommendations for improvement.

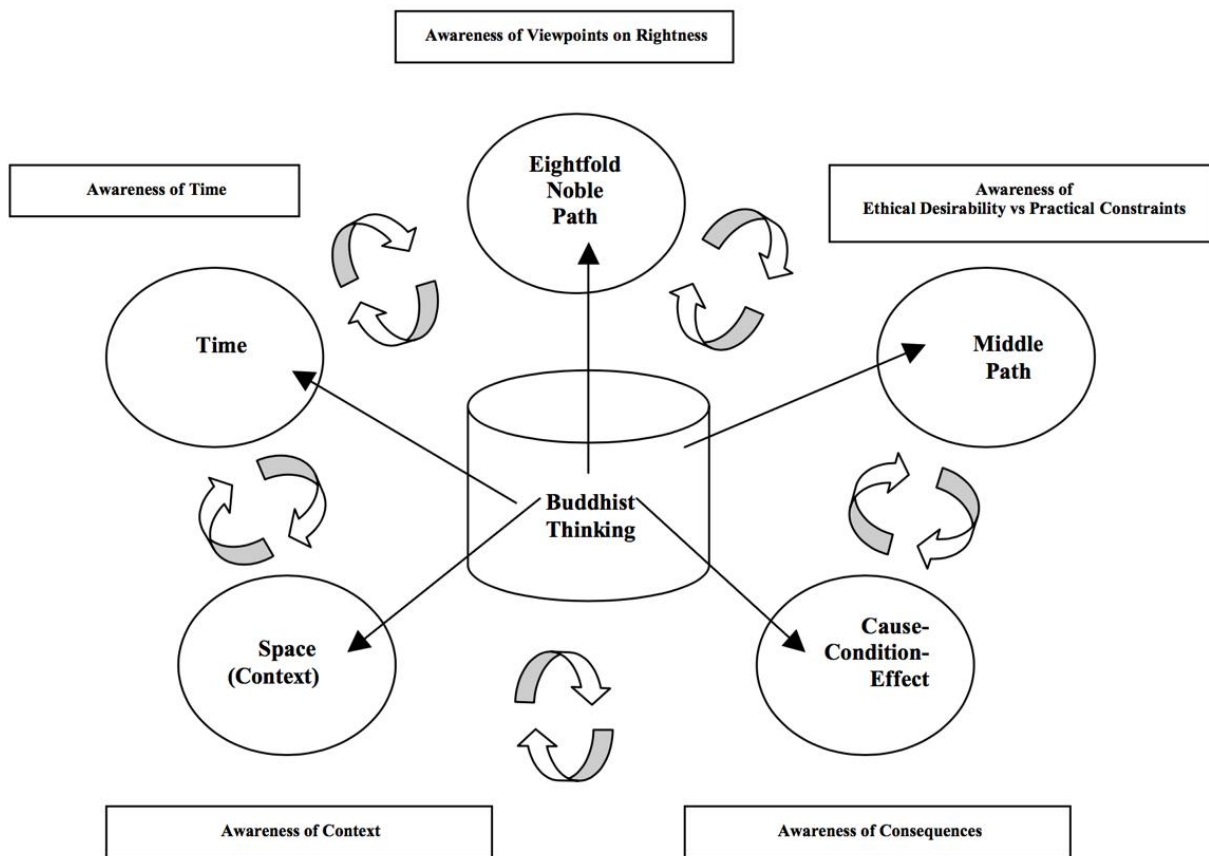


Figure 2.4 Five Keys Buddhist Concept

Source: adapted from Shen (2007)

BSM has strongly connected with the five key concepts in Figure 2.4:

(1) The Eightfold Noble Path focuses on the perception of different aspects and boundaries; and by reflection, the “right” things are encouraged to seek in terms of view, thinking speech, action, living, endeavor, memory, and meditation. According to Shen (2014), exploring the “right” view encourages people to empower the openness to various viewpoints of others, which contributes to solve and prevent the conflict in organizations. The exploration of ‘right thinking’ encourages people to avoid harmful thinking such as covetousness, resentment, and malice, while the “right speech” helps people to avoid using the inappropriate language which can strengthen truthfulness in communication. ‘Right action’ encourages the avoidance of killing, stealing, and other significant misconducts which embolden to build ethical movements. Besides, exploring ‘right living’ means to do the good things for society, ‘right endeavor’ encourages the avoidance of idleness and apathy, thereby promoting a constructive relationship. Likewise, considering ‘right memory’ support every people can have their fair image and also enhances trust; ‘right meditation’ encourages the practice of mindfulness, which “enables appreciation of the relativity of all understandings of self due to interconnections with other people, concepts and things.” (Shen, 2014).

(2) The Middle Path emphasizes the balance between ethical principles and practical compulsion. BSM using Middle Path concept can reduce extreme views in the general environment, bring mutual benefit to the organization.

(3) Cause-Condition-Effect: These factors are inseparable in Buddhist concepts. The constant causes with different conditions can lead to different effects, which means that “condition” refers to the context that facilities the link between “cause”

and “effect.” BSM emphasizes this concept to indicate that the problem is complex, and we need to consider carefully about this kind of relationship to make the right decision.

(4) Space (context): The concept of space emphasizes the need to be aware of interrelation in decision-making, especially concerning cultural and ecological context. The BSM asks people to consider those context in decision making, also defining the issues relating to systemic problems.

(5) Time: Basing on Buddhist beliefs about the past, present, and future, the BSM encourages awareness of time issues. The previous actions can influence every movement in any milestone, and it also impacts to the following step. By considering the timeline, we can reduce future problems.

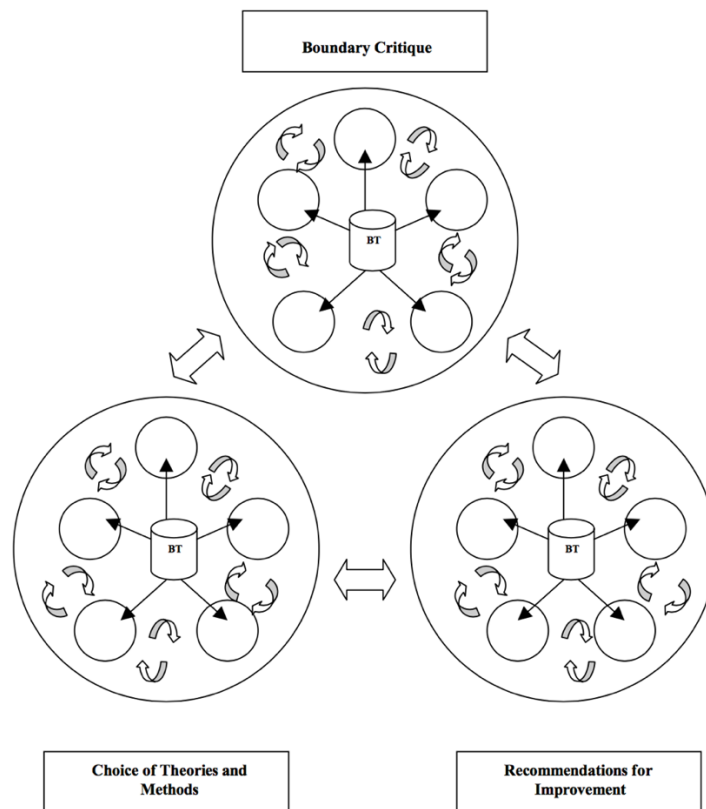


Figure 2.5 The BSM Process of Intervention

Source: adapted from Shen (2007)

Figure 2.5 show the BSM which combines systemic intervention and five keys Buddhist concepts. This is critical methodology which can support organizations to explore boundary in problematic situations; guide the choice of method for intervention; and give the recommendations for advancement.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction of Research Case

Le Group of Companies - a Vietnam business enterprise in the creative industry have been chosen to conduct this Study. Le Group of Companies is one of the leading organizations in Vietnam about consulting brand strategy, publishing, public relations, and event management (established in 2002). One of the companies - Le Bros is a member of a global network of independent owner-operated agencies with 80 agencies in 50 countries. Currently, Le Group has about 130 staffs in subsidiaries with a range of businesses in the creative industry: Le Bros, Le Media, and Creativa.

Eight individuals, including chairman, directors, and staffs in the Le Group were invited as the interviewees, and then the Study uses research questions to ask them about organizational issues. The research was initiated based on using Buddhist Systems Methodology (BSM), which is a problem dealing approach combined Eastern Buddhist philosophy with Western Systems Thinking. For BSM, there are totally 36 questions, every 12 questions for boundary critique, choice theories and methods, recommendations for actions for improvement (Shen, 2007).

3.2 Research Steps

3.2.1 Research Step 1 And Questions

3.2.1.1 Interview: Sample And Data Collection

Eight in-depth interviews were conducted, and the Study did interviews individually. Each interview took about 2 hours and spread a month to complete all the meetings. A final list of eight interviewees includes various positions within

the Le Group, which ensures that the data collected will reflect the different views whenever the Study use Buddhist systems methodology questions to ask them. Table 3.1 show the interviewee list includes chairman, vice presidents of the Le Group’s subsidiaries, middle managers and staffs:

Table 3.1 Interviewee List

Interviewee	Title
L.Q.V	Chairman
D.T.H.D	Vice President of Le Bros
N.V.T	Vice President of Le Media
N.H.H	CEO of Creativa
T.T.H.G	Business Development Director
D.T.M.H	Human Resource Manager
N.H.T	Account Executive
L.D.T	Public Relations Executive

Source: Original Study

To discover the organizational problems of the Le Group, this research uses set of 12 questions adapted from Shen’s Study (2007) for boundary critique (Appendix II – Boundary Critique questions)

3.2.1.2 Issue Identification

The Study has used qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews will be recorded through voice recording and interview note, then all records will be turned into written transcript. I analyze basing on this transcript to explore the meanings underlying physical messages, and identify the real problems of the organization.

3.2.2 Research Step 2 and Questions

3.2.2.1 Choices of Theories and Methods

To deal with the organizational problems of the Le Group, this research used set of 12 questions adapted from Shen's Study (2007 for reflecting choices of theories and methods (Appendix II – Choices of Theories and Methods questions)

3.2.2.2 Finalizing the Set of Methods

To deal with a number of organizational culture problems of Le Group, this stage will provide a final list of the set of systems methodologies to the business enterprise. This part has presented how to use BSM Stage 2, which analyze the possible management systems methods to apply into Le Group of companies.

3.2.3 Research Step 3

3.2.3.1 Recommendations for Improvement

After finalizing the set of methods, the research set the meeting with Chairman, also members of board of directors of Le Group of Companies. The purpose of the meeting is obvious, the research has presented to them about their organizational culture problems, and also the suggestion for applying methodologies from systems theories.

3.2.3.2 The Feedback Result of Le Group

After presentation to Le Group's leaders, the Study collected their feedback about the research, such as the possibility of methods chosen, their consideration during they apply those methods. All comments from Le Group of companies will be noted, which is a vital material to get the research results and finding of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

FIELDWORK – ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

4.1 Introduction

The application of utilizing Systems Thinking and Buddhist Systems Methodology (BSM) into the business management in Vietnam, such as Le Group is the main focus of our research. This section is discussing the practicality of the topic in Vietnam, which is a country having most of the business environment influenced by Buddhism. There are some reasons that Chairman Mr. Le Quoc Vinh has agreed. First of all, the chairman is an open-minded person who is willing to accept new thinking in management, especially when we directly mentioned Systems thinking and adapting Systems methodology in his company, the Chairman listened intently and encouraged to do this research. Besides, organizational culture is also a concern of the Le Group in this time whenever the organization has been reforming the structure, shaping new policies as well as considering management tools to create an efficient operation. By the time, the Study mentions the topic and express the aspiration to research with Mr. Vinh by sending an email from Taiwan to Vietnam, then the Study is allowed to conduct the research. Immediately after receiving that approval, the first task was to identify organizational issues of the Le Group.

4.2 Fieldwork Research Plan

4.2.1 Planning

In the planning section, there are including preparing questions and considering the number of interviewers in the Le Group, as well as their positions in the organization (chairman, directors, vice presidents, middle managers, staffs).

The first preparation is necessary due to the following reasons. Firstly, at the Le Group, their workload is hard; most of them will not have much time for interviewing, so it is crucial not only to define the purpose of the interview. Secondly, regarding choosing the interviewees, we need to select the right people matching with the research purposes, and this helps research have useful outcomes whenever we get information from the interview. A final list of eight interviewees includes various positions within the Le Group, which ensures that the information collected will reflect the different views whenever we use Buddhist systems methodology questions to ask them. This list includes chairman, vice presidents of the Le Group's subsidiaries (Le Bros, Le Media, Creativa), middle managers and low staffs:

- Mr. Le Quoc Vinh – Chairman of the Le Group
- Ms. Do Thi Hai Dang – Vice President of Le Bros
- Ms. To Thi Huong Giang - Business Development Director of Le Group
- Ms. Doan Thi Mai Hien – Head of Human Resources Department of Le Group
- Mr. Nguyen Van Trung – Vice President of Le Media
- Mr. Nguyen Huu Hien – CEO of Creativa
- Ms. Nguyen Ha Trang – Account Executive of Le Bros
- Ms. Le Dieu Thuy – Communication Specialist of Le Bros

The interviewees play a vital role in applying BSM to solve organizational issues; their varied answers will be the basement for identifying the hidden problem. The research plan consists of four steps as below, and this process is translated into Vietnamese to send to the interviewers at the Le Group, with the first order as sending to the chairman for approval and having comments on the content, then send it to the others in the list of interviewees.

4.2.2 Proposed Fieldwork Steps

Step 1: Familiarization and observation (1 week)

The first step of this Study is making good relationship with interviewees and let them feel more comfortable to get information from them naturally because research method is in-depth interviews. Furthermore, the Study has defined obviously that these interviews created a connection between researcher and organization, especially, the purpose of this research is supporting their leadership in managing organizational issues.

Step 2: Issue identification (4 weeks)

The Study plans to talk to the different positions of the Le Group as the list of interviewees identified aforementioned. The purpose of these interviews is to explore issues related to organizational problems that they have been experiencing while working at the Le Group (using questions of Appendix 1). After discussing and finding a list of issues, the Study will choose common issues that most of them have mentioned or the insight as underlying assumptions.

Step 3: Intervention using BSM (8 weeks)

With the chosen issue, the Study applies the BSM mode 1 to find out the real problem. After using BSM mode 1 and identifying a problem related to the corporate culture to be addressed, the Study will review, analyze and choose the systems thinking theories to find an applicable recommendation for the Le Group's leaders. After getting some suggestions based on academic researches which could deal chosen problem, the researcher will meet leaders of Le Group directly, introduce and explain to them about these suggestions.

Step 4: Follow up and support (12 weeks)

By that time for recommendations, the interviewees will give to the Study feedbacks, and frequently updated about their movement in improving the

situation of the organization. This follow-up could help Study understand the process of using recommendation as well as evaluate the practicality of systems theories and organizational studies in the context of a Vietnam business enterprise such as the Le Group.

4.3 Fieldwork Action Research

Step 1: Familiarization and observation was introduced in the planning section as aforementioned. For saving the time, the interviewees are contacted on the first week of February in 2019 by digital tools like email and phone call. Therefore, the Study had necessary information about their title, status of work, and predicted some of their behaviors from observing their attitudes. Moreover, two people among interviewees have been our current friends which includes an executive staff (low position) and a vice president of Le Bros (high-up position), so we not only firstly set up the meetings and collect the answers from them but also find out more in-depth information about organizational issues of the Le Group. However, the timescale for this step was longer than planned, it last two weeks, because the interviewees were too busy during that period. Their workload is quite heavy, so the interview with chairman and managers were quite difficult to arrange; normally, the Study needs to set the date with them before at least one or two days. Then, each person had about thirty minutes or one hour for an interview. Each interview with the Le Group staff was conducted by asking a set of critical questions (Appendix I), and these series of interview questions aimed to know about their roles in the corporation, the way they make decisions, their methods in solving issues. In each key question, the Study made an effort to observe their reaction, and found out more information relating to the measurement after their decision making, the following impacts of those decisions to the organization, as

well as examine their interest about applying systems thinking and Buddhist systems methodology into their work. All answers are substantial input for the next step about defining the organizational issues.

Step 2: The various answers are collected from interviewees, which showed some organizational issues. From the interview data, the Study figured out six particular organizational issues:

- (1) Some employees have a low level of motivation, which results that the efficiency of work is not productive, and the turnover is quite high. Ms. Doan Thi Mai Hien (Head of HR Department of Le Group) mentioned about this issue, whenever HR department organized some activities in order to encourage people to increase productivity, but recently several staff still keep the low motivation, some quitted the job”.
- (2) Leaders face to difficulties in balance the time between functional work and strategic work, which limited the vision of work. As Ms. D.T.H.D said that: “As a role Vice President of Le Bros, it seems to be difficult to balance the time and energy between strategic and operational work, because I am swamped with work and involve in many projects while my position needs more requirements in leadership skills such as time management and strategic thinking” .
- (3) Lack of interaction and cohesion between some employees in the organization with a significant reason as excessive workload, the time for relaxing and genuinely sharing is a minority of working hours, which has made some employees have a lack of empathy with others in work. Ms. N.H.T (Account Executive) realized a fact between lower staffs. In some mutual projects, she saw that some employees argued seriously and even some of those disputations made some people angry.

- (4) The workflow has been not fluently because of the new process, which makes a new interaction in the whole organization. Ms. T.T.H.G said that after more one year since the Le Group restructured in 2018, new polices are established, and those processes make previous perceptions of many employees hard to adapt to the new system.
- (5) Middle-managers can not transfer effectively the culture from chairman to lower staffs. Mr. N.V.T (Vice President of Le Media) said, “Although the chairman understood about the importance of organizational culture, in the point of our view, the chairman is very busy so he did not have much time in the workplace for solving these issues. Besides, in this period, middle managers are also overwhelmed with projects and can not contribute much in transferring the culture of chairman.”
- (6) A gap in generations results in the hard adaption of some employees. Chairman L.Q.V said that the Le Group has different generations, which results in the values, beliefs are also totally different and very difficult to achieve harmony.

4.4 Issue Choice

After collecting and filtering the aforementioned issues, the Study figured out that all issues are seemed to be connected, and only one has been elected to deal. During the interview time, most of them (6 people) expressed the imbalance between working hours and sharing time in the workplace, they usually have many projects in the same time while the companies of the Le Group has the lack of human resource. Generally, this situation is widespread among communication consultancies in Vietnam; however, this issue results to other issues such as low motivation in employees, decrease the quality of the cultural transfer and increase

the gap of generations because they do not have a worthy investment for understanding people around here. In order to create a shared value system, the Le Group currently need more time for rising interaction and connection in work and social life of all members. According to Human Resource manager, the leaders also organize the training courses, and the short break time for all employees with the purpose increasing the interacts between chairman, directors, managers, and staffs, but those actions have just been practical partially.

The final issue was “leadership problem.” The leadership style have a crucial role in transfer the message in the whole organization; besides, communication and organizational culture have a strong relationship, therefore dealing with the leadership issue can reduce the impact of other issues. Solving this leadership issue can be an enormous benefit to both the Le Group and the research. Moreover, many Vietnamese leaders, including leaders in the Le Group, believe partly or absolutely in Buddha; accordingly, this is a good condition for applying the BSM to deal with this organizational culture problem.

4.5 Plan for Intervention

The plan for the fieldwork recommendation have begun using BSM since May 2019 on the issue relating to leadership. The intervention was tackled with the following phases:

- (1) Firstly, the Study uses the boundary critique (BSM Mode 1 Stage 1) with Chairman L.Q.V, who is the highest decision-maker of the Le Group.
- (2) Secondly, the Study uses the boundary critique with others, including two Vice President of subsidiaries, one CEO of another subsidiary, one HR manager, one director, and two executive staffs.

(3) Choosing the methods and systematic theories based on answers from previous part. In this step, the Study give leaders of the Le Group theories and methods which could be appropriate for dealing with the organizational culture problem in the previous stage.

In summary, in this part, the final choice relating to organizational culture is Leadership problem, which is a strategic issue for the Le Group to bring remarkable development in our research and the Le Group's improvement. For this reason, the Study frame the outline of an intervention procedure for the problem.



CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

5.1 The Summary of BSM Stage 1 (Boundary Critique)

From different perspectives of interviewees, the Study has summarized their answers about leadership problem by asking 12 questions for boundary critique:

*(1) What currently motivates you and the other to define the leadership issue?
What ought to be your/ their motivation?*

Regarding Le Group's leadership, all senior leaders share a mutual vision when co-operating the company; they have the same purpose that constructing Le Group to become a reliable partner in communication strategy consultancy of businesses in Vietnam. According to chairman L.Q.V: "Le Group's core values are creative-oriented and attach to human values. Established in 2002, Le Group of companies has had many corporations with big businesses and prestigious organizations in Vietnam, such as Viettel, Vingroup, Vietnam Airlines, Davines, VP Bank, Hennessy". In 2013, they were a member of a global network like Worldwide Partners, Inc., which connected with many international agencies. Ms. D.T.H.D (Vice president of Le Bros): "The leaders at Le Group have the cohesion and coordination to work evenly. The directors of Le Group companies understand the general development and spirit of chairman in building a corporate culture to become a partner of clients." While Ms. L.D.T (Public Relations Executive) mentioned that "Leadership in the company creates a friendly environment, but in the heavy workload of agency, some positions as middle-managers still have some

problems in the transmission of information, and sometimes, this affects employees' work motivation." It can be obviously that there is a bit of difference from the perspective of the lower level in the company about leadership.

(2) Is covetousness, resentment or malice influencing you or others in defining the leadership issue? If so, what might the issue look like from your or others point of view if these were removed?

All interviewees concluded that there is no covetousness, resentment, or malice in the company. Leaders have built the culture basing on human values like sharing and openness, and typically, leaders always are the pioneer implementing this culture. Mr. N.V.T (Vice President of Le Media) said: "Le Group creates a feedback mechanism for everyone can raise their voice. In the process of working, every employee can speak their thoughts through many channels to leaders. The leadership in corporate culture is conveyed through core values to employees, helping them understand the company's vision. However, everyone will understand the leaders' thinking in different ways, so there is still a certain gap between people." The Business Development Director said: "Leaders in Le Group are fully in agreement, but whenever conveying to lower levels, sometimes the staffs are not fully aware. For example, leaders think there have some projects in the company contributing to long-term development for Le Group; however, some employees lack vision and patience as well and can not see the importance of those projects." There is no wrong thinking when they define leadership issues, but still have a gap between the minds of employees and leaders.

(3) Is lying, deceitfulness, slander or any other "improper" use of language involved being defined by you or others? If so, what might the issue look like from yours or other points of view if these were removed?

Most of the leaders in Le Group use explanation to persuade the lower staffs, therefore in the company, there are no powerful words, or give the orders without feedback. Mr. N.V.T (Vice President of Le Media) said that "Since I worked at Le Group, I have never heard any shouting in the office; leaders always use the language with the calm and convincing argument." However, sometimes, improper use of language happens between middle-managers and lower staffs. Ms. N.H.T (Account Executive) said that "Some of the mid-level managers have got their hands full managing multiple projects at the same time, so sometimes they lack empathy to use appropriate words in working together. I think if those people can understand the situations of others, they can avoid unnecessary controversy and make the communication more fluently".

(4) Is there any major misconduct (killing, stealing, etc.) linked with the issue?

If so, should this be including as an integral part of defining the issue?

All of the interviewees affirmed that there was not any immorality relating to leadership in the Le Group. This agency emphasizes on human ethics and moral value, especially honesty, and any improper actions will be prevented immediately. Evidently, the vice president D.T.H.D said, "Every people in Le Group were conscious of ethical issues, wrong actions have never happened because those can not be accepted here." Obviously, leaders of Le Group have deep understanding about established principles.

(5) Is the issue being defined in a way that privileges your own concerns over wider social concerns? Is there a way to define the issue in a way that included a wider set of concerns, without making the issue impossible to address?

Regarding defining the leadership issue with narrow concerns, the director in business development said: "Generally, the gap in generations can affect

leadership in business, for example, leaders of Le Group were born between the 1970s to 1980s, while the youngest employees of company was born in 2001, this can lead to challenges in communication." How directions are given to young generation needs to be changed because their education is different from previous generations. Mr. N.V.T (Vice President of Le Media) agreed with this: "The young employees who were born in the 1990s require higher criteria in salary and experience; therefore, leadership must be adjusted to fit with this kind of generation." Leaders in the Le Group seem to face the difficulties whenever facing to various generations within the companies.

(6) Is there idleness, apathy or avoidance of the issue? Who should be engaged with the issue and how?

Regarding the time dawdling, insensitivity, all interviewees said that, although in the Le Group leaders try to create multi-channel to receive the opinions from the staff of departments, however in some common issues of the company, several employees are not active in giving their actual thoughts. This is the norm, which stems from Asian culture where most people do not express their true feelings to preserve harmony. Ms. T.T.H.G said that "In the Le Group, we organize the meeting to review the advantages and disadvantages of execution to improve skills for the next projects. However, some of them are shy to express their true opinions, and maybe they are very busy with other projects; therefore, the quality of those review meetings is not as high as expectation ". Besides, the endeavor of leadership can be affected by time management. For instance, Ms. D.T.H.D (Vice President of Le Bros) said that: "I aware of the importance of professional management skills, but I do not have enough time to learn and practice frequently." Certainly, some leaders of Le Group can not spend their time effectively, especially in improving the leadership skills.

(7) Are there any misrepresentations of self, other or the non-human world in the definition of the issue? Have you tested out what you attribute to others by asking them? Should you do so, and if not, why not? If there are misrepresentations what might the issue look like from yours or other points of view if these were corrected?

Regarding misrepresentation, this also happened which is the result of Vietnam culture in the workplace; sometimes they cannot say their genuine opinions because of maintaining the harmony, besides the rush time in business restricts evoking the exact memory. Mr. N.V.T (Vice President of Le Media) said: "Normally, many departments will involve in projects, so a failure of anyone can impact the others. Therefore, I propose that every staff need to review after finishing the project, and each person can share the lesson they learn from this project. However, since everyone is usually busy with the workload, this may not be possible at certain times." Also, sometimes, the information is too much, which results in a misunderstanding between staff, especially whenever team members needs to review their productivity after completing projects. Mr. N.H.H (CEO of Creativa) said: "To make a working process clear, I am trying to set up a digital tool which could record all interacts in projects, however, this work take generous allocation of time". Although the leaders of Le Group take the efforts to operate the company, but it is challenging to understand actual viewpoints of employees.

(8) Has the mental discipline of Buddhist thinking been applied sufficiently in defining the issue? If not, can further Buddhist systemic investigation be undertaken?

Regarding the aspect about application of Buddhist thinking, the interviewees saw some useful applications in leadership issues. The chairman concluded that "The Buddhist thinking is interesting, and we can consider applying this in our

business because Le Group is the agency that emphasizes human ethical value and wants to be human partners of clients in strategy."

Vice President Mr. N.V.T also said, "I always remember a piece of advice from Buddha, which means that we need to see everyone fairly. Leaders need to be calm in every decision; this is the condition to observe various views of everyone; therefore, I never make the decision whenever I am angry". Those points illustrate that the leaders of Le Group believe partly in Buddhist thinking which makes them to be interesting in applying those into their business.

(9) From the various points of view of those involved and (potentially) affected, what are the different possibilities for defining 'middle paths' between their ethical and practical concerns? What risks might be associated with different middle paths, and which one should be chosen?

Leaders in the Le Group usually share their ideas among the board of directors with the purpose of choosing a suitable direction, bringing the company's overall benefits. For example, when leaders want to inform the company policies to employees, leaders need to combine many different ways according to rational and emotional reasons. Also, in a company with different generations, the use of appropriate language is necessary.

However, it is difficult to harmonize the perspective between ethics and practices in an agency environment with high pressures from ensuring profitability. Ms. D.T.H.D, as the role of Vice President, said that "Our company always focuses on ethical values, but in the changing environment, sometimes it's challenging to harmonize everything. This competitive market requires us to make a quick decision because we still need to earn the profit and follow the needs of clients". Though leaders of Le Group understand that some quick decisions are not good for the long-term development, but it is difficult to change this situation.

(10) From the various points of view of those involved and (potentially) affected, what cause-condition-effect relationships are important to understanding this issue? What are their potential consequences and the risks of ignoring them? Which should therefore be accounted for, and what conditions make this choice the right one?

The respondents mentioned some stories relating to restructuring of Le Group more than one year ago. "The cause was that restructuring the whole group and establishing new processes, the condition is a decision of chairman based on the need for transforming the business model from family company to professional company, and the effect is a significant shift in human resources from the leaders, managers to staff." Chairman said that this transformation is an important milestone that helps the Le Group develop a new strategy and expand the potential ability to serve the clients. Therefore, leaders can manage effectively using professional tools and new work processes.

After restructuring, the previous organizational culture has changed a lot. Ms. D.T.M.H (Human Resources Manager) said that some of the critical former leaders and staff left the company, which could affect the culture of the Le Group. Mr. N.H.H (CEO of Creativa), who works at Le Group after restructuring, feels that "Although Le Group restructured, leaders in the companies still keep the nice and comfortable atmosphere among staff." Ms. T.T.H.G (Business Development director) concluded that "The distance between the chairman and lower-level staff is not so far like some companies, for instance, in some projects, the chairman will discuss with various staff to engage the ideas together." The effort of leaders in the present is reducing the gap between staff, managers, and directors, and they hope that these efforts can create proper conditions at work for teams.

(11) From the various points of view of those involved and (potentially) affected, what cultural and ecological contexts are relevant to understanding the issue? What is your view in relation to these other view, and why?

Regarding the cultural and ecological contexts relevant to understand the issue, we extend discussion with interviewees about the differences in generations, and the social elements affect to the workforce in Hanoi (North area) and Saigon (South area). Firstly, about the young generation in Vietnam, they think they have many job opportunities, so the turnover rate in companies is quite high. Staff in Le Group work in the creative industry; therefore, they change their job quickly. Ms. T.T.H.G said that "Nowadays, the young generation has many choices for their career; for example, they can open their own business, start-up or work as a freelancer.

Secondly, Le Group's leaders saw a significant difference between employees in two branches in Northern and Southern of Vietnam (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city). Southern employees seem to be more practical than northern staffs." Besides, Vietnam's creative industry is dynamic, so young employees have many job offers; this is a big challenge of recruiting and retaining talent. Mr. N.H.H (CEO of Creativa) has a similar opinion: "The most valuable asset of an agency like Le Group is the people, so leaders need to maintaining and flourishing the human capital." Le Group's leaders saw the differences among various generations of two labor markets and take the effort to keep the talent in their industry.

(12) From the various points of view of those involved and (potentially) affected, what time scale for dealing with this issue should be adopted, and why? What is your view in relation to these other view?

Regarding the time scale for solving the leadership issue, most learders and staff expressed that leadership improvement depended on many factors. All

leaders are aware of the importance of growing professional thinking and skills in leadership. The chairman saw leadership as a process of learning; he said, "I try to learn new things every day and always treasure human values to create a learning environment in Le Group. We usually organize the workshop once a month and invite experts to train managers and staff about professional skills". Mr. N.V.T (Vice president of Le Media) said, "In Le Group, we accept the diversity and leaders always aware of the importance of learning from others." Besides, two interviewees expressed that their leadership ability needs to be improved. Ms. D.T.H.D (Vice president of Le Bros) thought that "I need to allocate more time to learn about professional models in management, and I am willing to try the new approaches and apply them into work." Time for improvement leadership may be the big challenge of leaders in Le Group because of their swamped schedule.

5.2 The Summary of BSM Stage 2 (Choice of Theories and Methods)

After supporting leaders of Le Group to reflect their aspects relating to organizational leadership, in this part, the Study reports BSM Stage 2, which describes a set of suggested theories and methods for improvement in Le Group. These systems theories and methods would be capable of tackling the concerns of participants in this Study, then the Study proposes and discusses with the company about the practicality of these.

(1) What method(s) foster desirable motivations and inhibit undesirable ones (as defined through boundary critique)?

The outputs from the previous stage indicated that there were different motivations among the interviewees. It is understandable because of the heavy

workload of the agency, which makes different levels faced difficulties in understanding the mutual purpose. Vice President of Le Bros mentioned that “Leaders of Le Group understand that we should encourage the whole organization to look at the big picture with similar motivations. We are busy and also do not know how to understand the hidden motive”.

These points proved that leaders of Le Group need a methodology that can help them to understand the different perspectives and make the employees involve deeply in the discussion. The Study suggests leaders of Le Group use Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) (Checkland, 1990), which methodology can help people widen the currently narrow boundaries they have, and discover the different motivations among employees.

(2) What method(s) will eliminate desirable or minimize any covetousness, resentment or malice you have to identified?

According to the results of stage 1, all interviewees concluded that there is no unacceptable thinking in the company. However, the Business Development Director mentioned that “Some employees do not understand the long term vision whenever we do some projects. In the internal environment, there are some constraints in communication that make us lack mutual understanding”.

For improving the quality of communication channels, the Study proposes that the leaders of Le Group can use the Viable Systems Model (VSM) (Beer, 1985) for upgrading the organizational structure. The flow of information between departments can be better because VSM is considered as the applicable approach to deal with crucial environmental issues in the organization.

(3) What method(s) eliminate or minimize any lying, deceitfulness, slander or any other ‘improper’ use of language you have identified?

Inappropriate use of speech was pointed out in the communication between middle managers and lower staffs (according to an Account Executive in the Le Group). This phenomenon arose from “poor” communication, stemming from the hierarchical structure, especially in the Asian culture. For dealing with problematic power relationships and this lack of open dialogue, the leaders of Le Group can use VSM, which methodology focuses on designing fluent communication, also help leaders to control systems with the culture of fairness.

(4) What method(s) will tackle any major misconduct (killing, stealing, etc.) you have identified?

A PR Executive of Le Bros said that “In Le Group, we always understand the ethical principles of the company and avoid doing the wrong actions for others.” To boosting the substantial environments of the whole organization, the Study encourages the leaders to learn from a case Study about business ethics, also suggests Le Group frequently improves their code of conduct.

(5) What method(s) will help in preventing a narrow set of concerns being privileged over wider social concerns, but without making the issue impossible to address?

The diversity of viewpoints among different generations in Le Group is one of the concerns of leaders. As Vice President of Le Bros said that “Leaders of Le Group always focus on the harmony of organization, but sometimes, we are quite confused in choosing the leadership style whenever giving the lower staffs the direction because of their attitude among generations is different.”

Again, the Study suggests the leaders of Le Group should learn how to use VSM to improve communications with the purpose that is fostering them to exchange different viewpoints and enable discussion.

(6) What method(s) will work to counteract any idleness, apathy or avoidance that you have identified?

In previous stage, the Study pointed out that there was avoidance in expressing honest opinions. This is the norm in the Asian culture, wherever people often hide their thinking to maintain harmony. The Business Development Director said that “After finish the projects, we often review for improving; however, some employees do not want to share their opinions in those meetings. The leaders here really want to find a way to explore their actual thinking and understand the current situation of our employees”.

The Study suggests the board of directors of Le Group use the BSM as a method to communicate with their employees, especially the questions to discover the boundary critique. With those questions, the leaders can have to get more useful information to predict the hidden assumptions and plan for a better future.

(7) What method(s) will help to minimize misrepresentations of self, others or the non-human world?

As the part mentioned above, the interviewees said that some employees in Le Group often hide their honest feelings, which stems from Asian culture. Vice President of Le Media said: “As a leader, I always find the optimal way to understand my staff for supporting purpose. But in the hierarchy, this is a challenge to get true opinions from them”.

For this phenomenon, the Study recommends leaders of Le Group should think about the long term improvement with VSM. This new design thinking can set up the links between departments of the company and help the leaders get the more necessary information.

(8) What method(s) will help promote the mental discipline of Buddhist thinking, if this is not sufficiently in evidence?

In the Vietnam culture affected by Buddhist thinking, some leaders of Le Group believe partly or entirely in Buddhist philosophy. For instance, Chairman said: “We currently lean toward human ethical values, which is similar to some concepts in Buddhist thinking which always encourage people to do good things. Besides, I have recognized that many Vietnamese owner enterprises have attention to the Buddhist philosophy, and this is the positive sign for applying methodology relating to Buddhist concepts.” Following those reasons, the Study strongly recommended the Le Group to use BSM as management methods, also promoting Buddhist application into the Vietnam business context.

(9) What method(s) will support people in developing the middle path between ethical and practical imperatives identified through the boundary critique?

After asking the boundary critique questions, the Study found out that Le Group takes many efforts to practice the ethical values in their movements. However, about the practical side, they still need to improve financial status for ensuring the profit annually. Vice President of Le Bros said that “We try to fill the gap between long term strategy and shorter operations. Le Group always uses the ‘human partner’ philosophy for consulting to clients. This kind of approach in Vietnam often takes a lot of time to adapt to Vietnamese businesses, while we still need to operate the whole company. Therefore, we are looking for a new way to balance and deal with this problem”.

The Study again suggests leaders of Le Group use BSM for boosting the humanistic culture of Le Group, as well as VSM, for improving the operational activities basing on a sustainable structure.

(10) What method(s) will help people account for the key cause-condition- effect relationships identified through the boundary critique?

According to outcomes of BSM stage 1, most interviewees mentioned one milestone of Le Group more than one year ago whenever restructuring the whole company. This event was considered as “cause,” which lead to many effects in the organizational culture of Le Group, especially leadership in a situation whenever some key employees quit their jobs, and Le Group must recruit much new staff. Human Resource Managers said that “Restructuring was an important milestone of Le Group. Then, our department needed to recruit frequently and faced many difficulties because the labor market in the creative industry is competitive.”. Besides, Account Executive of Le Bros, who worked at Le Group after restructuring, said that “I saw many new processes and those changes quite often, which make freshmen like me cannot fully understand the function of some positions.”

For tackling with problems relating to human resource, the Study suggests leaders of Le Group use SSM to reflect many aspects which impact to business circle. For example, SSM helps leaders analyze the problem situation by discovering the “root definition”. By using SSM, leaders can develop conceptual models for solving problems.

(11) What method(s) will help people account for the key cultural and ecological contexts identified through the boundary critique, and will they work in those contexts?

About critical cultural and ecological, the leaders of Le Group concerns about two things: the differences in the mindset of employees, and the devotion of young employees in the creative industry’s workforce. Firstly, Business Development Director thought that “There was a remarkable difference in turnover rates between Southern staff and Northern ones, it’s seemed to be Southern employees changes their jobs more quickly’. Secondly, CEO of Creativa previously

mentioned the issue relating to recruit and retain talents: “In any organization, people are the most valuable asset, especially in Le Group, which is an agency providing the consultancy service.”

To ensure harmony in communication between regional groups, also boost the large-scale operation, the leaders can use VSM as a tool to meet the requirements of surviving in the changing environment.

(12) What method(s) will work in the time scale specified in the boundary?

Time management is one of the considerable concern of most leaders in Le Group. As Vice President of Le Bros, she said: “We often found the difficulties for keeping the balance between long term management and short-term operations. Until now, I also need to involve too much into general projects for supporting our colleagues, so it seems that I do not have time for thinking about personal development in management”. This issue stems from many reasons relating to not only the method of cooperation in Le Group but also the broader context of the creative industry, which requires agencies to work hard.

To deal with those problems, the Study suggests Le Group use VSM, SSM together. VSM will help leaders design the professional way in teamwork, predict the future of the workforce in changing the environment, and SSM will provide the leaders a broader and more in-depth view of root situations of the whole organization.

Table 5.1 Summary of Choices and Methods

Issues relating to Leadership problems	Choices and Methods Dealing with Issues
(1) Different motivations (heavy workload, misunderstanding the mutual purpose)	Soft Systems Methodology (SSM): widen the current boundaries, discover the motivations
(2) Constraints in communication that make leaders and employees lack of understanding	Viale Systems Model (VSM): Upgrading organizational culture, improve the fluence of communication
(3) Poor Communication stems from hierachical structure	VSM: Design and control systems with culture of fairness
(4) No misconduct	Continue to boosting the business ethics, improve code of conduct
(5) The diversity among different generations in Le Group	VSM: improve communication, foster people to exchange viewpoints
(6) Avoid to express honest opinions	BSM: use boundary critique questions for predict the hidden assumptions
(7) Misrepresentations of self, hide the feelings (Asian Culture)	VSM: set up links between departments of the company
(8) The leaders want to continue pursuit human ethical values	BSM: Management methods promoting the Buddhist application
(9) The gap between ethical & practical; longterm strategy & shortterm operation.	BSM: boost humanistic culture VSM: sustainable structure for improving the operational activities
(10) Milestone “Restructuring” which make the big change in human resources, process, culture.	SSM: Deal human resources problems, helps leaders analyze the situation
(11) Significant differences of employees in South and North labor market	VSM: harmonize the communication, boost large-scale operation, adapt to changing environment
(12) Diffiiculties for keeping balance between longterm and shortterm development	VSM: Design professional way in teamwork, SSM: provide leaders a broader, deeper

Source: Original Study

Table 5.1 summarizes the choices and methods solving all aspects which are discovered from previous stage. In summary of BSM Stage 2, these results suggest that there is links between those issues in leadership of Le Group; and to deal systemically with this problem, the Study finalizes the set of methods including VSM, SSM, BSM.

5.3 The Summary of BSM Stage 3 (Recommendations for Improvement)

After finalizing the set of methods, the Study had the meeting with leaders of Le Group in November 2019 to present this research. Because they are swamped and the time for the meeting is limited, the Study had sent them a document for summarizing all parts for 2-weeks before the meeting in order to ensure that they can read first and prepare the questions for asking during the session.

In that presentation, the Study reviewed some critical points about BSM stages, especially the set of methods. During the meeting, Chairman and other leaders had listened to the explanation, then they discussed with the Study about their issues and solution to deal with those. The Study focuses on clarifying the critical terms in Systems Thinking, also explain to them how to apply BSM, VSM, SSM into Le Group. With the purpose that is supporting the decision making of Le Group's leaders, the Study introduced the benefits of applying those methods into their management. Such as, VSM helps the leaders operate fluently the organizational structure, SSM is a useful tool for solving the problems relating to human resources and also BSM is considered as the new way of methodology when applying into management in Asian culture.

After listening to the whole presentation, two leaders of Le Group agreed that systematic thinking brings to us a new way of thinking, which could be a holistic view of the organizational issues, especially in managing the current situation and predicting the future in the complexity era. However, because this is very new in Vietnam, so they also expressed concerns about the process of applying those methods. Chairman of Le Group gave his attention to BSM; they said, “The model of BSM is interesting for our companies. In the concepts of Buddhist thinking, we know about the Eight-noble path before and try to apply those values into running our business. Therefore, I consider how to start to apply this theory into the business.” To respond to this feedback from Chairman L.Q.V, the Study suggests he and other leaders of Le Group can start with the set of 12 questions in BSM Stage 1 (boundary critique). With those questions, the leaders can have a structured process whenever they plan and discuss with their teams in the future. By collecting information from different perceptions of various levels in the organization, the leaders will discover the real situation of their companies and have a strong foundation to make decisions.

Subsequently, the Chairman continued to raise another concern about the situation of business: “I saw systems thinking, and BSM could be useful for the long-term, but it seems to be taken many efforts with a lot of time. While business life is very competitive, which requires leaders to make quick decisions. How can we apply BSM, or VSM, SSM in this situation?”. To answer this question, the Study compared some consequences following the “cause-condition-effect” in BSM. If leaders easily to make a quick decision, many troubles can happen in the future, and then leaders will take a lot of time to recover the damage from those troubles. Therefore, it’s better if leaders think deeply, widely before making a decision. About the other methods such as VSM, SSM, Vice President of Le Bros

commented that: “The leaders of Le Group including me often feel that we do not have enough time for solving many issues in the organization. After listening to your presentation, I saw that we could get enormous benefits from applying the tools of VSM and SSM. I hope that we can learn how to apply those methods precisely to reduce or avoid unexpected issues in the future”. Overall, after the presentation and getting feedback from Le Group, those results indicate that leaders of Le Group are willing to apply BSM, VSM, SSM into their organization, moreover, they also expressed the demand to learn those methods as new professional management tools.



CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Research Discussion

Global business economics requires enterprises in a dynamic economy like Vietnam to transform organizational structure and leadership. In the context of the Vietnam business environment like Le Group of companies, varied viewpoints at different levels in the organization can be influenced by Asian culture with high power distance and western leadership styles. A case Study, which presented in this research, examines eight people of various levels from the chairman, managers, and lower staff. The results indicate that there is a particular gap in sharing diverse views in the corporation though leaders are well aware of the organizational culture's importance. Also, a management hierarchy in Asian culture and the difference found between members of different generations influence on the way of leadership, such as determining the right motivation and clarifying their ideas in Le Group. Leaders of Le Group of companies witnessed a difficult period since restructuring last year; meanwhile, they established new policies and changed the organizational structure. Many new employees of different ages enhanced the Le Group, which are considerable challenges in management.

After using BSM stage 1 and stage 2, the Study pointed out some organizational issues in the Le Group, which are similar to the issues of many business enterprises in Vietnam. In this Study, 'leadership problem', which problem relating to most of the other issues, is chosen as the priority for dealing. The research steps follow the process of BSM, including discovering the boundary

critique of leadership problems in the first stage, using BSM stage 2 in the next stage for choosing the appropriate methods basing on system theories. Those methods are proposed to leaders in Le Group to dealing with the problem. The Study also introduces a professional management tool for organizing the structure of the organization - The Viable System Model (VSM). VSM can be applied to stimulate the management process in the company, and support the leader can see the holistic picture of the organization internal and external. Besides, Soft Systems Methodologies could be used for solving the problems relating to human resources. However, to practice professional management tools in Le Group, leaders need to allocate resources efficiently in the long-term within the Vietnam business environment, changing constantly.

6.2 Research Contribution

Regarding academic contribution, the Study shows the applicability of new methodology for researchers to examine organizational problems in Asian culture. By first time using Buddhist systems methodology in a Vietnam Business Enterprise, the Study discovered a systemic problem about leadership and also supported to all interviewees saw that leadership plays a vital role in fostering a culture of open communication within the company.

Regarding practical contribution, the empirical findings in this Study provide a new understanding of systems thinking's application in the Vietnam context, also introduce an initial recommendation to deal with the leadership problem for leaders in a Vietnam business enterprise. BSM supported all interviewees in the Le Group to reflect the issues, for instance, the diversity in generations or numerous demands in agency work, limited time for apathy to others. This Study has shown that most leaders at Le Group are open-minded. They usually collect

feedback from employees and willing to learn new thinking; also, some of them are totally absorbed in the application of Buddhist concepts into their management. By proposing the methodology blended Buddhist philosophy with systems thinking approaches, the insights gained from this Study may be of assistance to foster leadership improvement in the Le Group of companies.

6.3 Research Limitation and Future Research

The generalizability of these results is subject to certain limitations. Firstly, Le Group of Companies is quite huge, while the time for meeting with leaders of Le Group is short because they are swamped. Even they try to arrange the time for interviewing and make their efforts, but sometimes it seems that they are a little bit distracted by a heavy workload. Secondly, depending on the scope of research, although the Study finds out many organizational issues, the Study only chooses the 'leadership' as the problem for dealing.

In the future, the Study will propose to continue using this kind of methodology as a useful tool to Study organizational problems; primarily, those organizations are influenced by Buddhist thinking. Further investigation and experimentation about the application of systems thinking into the Vietnam context are strongly recommended for new researches.

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Appendix I: Interview Questions for Familiarization

Interview name:

Date:

Position:

1. How long have you been at Le Group ?
2. What is your present role and title at Le Group ?
3. Is this full time, part time or voluntary ?
4. Do you expect to continue to be at Le Group for the next twelve months (because this is the length of my Study) ?
5. Do you have staff reporting to you ? How many staff ?
6. Do you make:
 - a) Strategic decisions (months and years)
 - b) Operational decisions (days and weeks)
 - c) Both?
7. How are strategic and operational decisions made in Le Group?
8. When you face a decision problem, what do you do ? For example, do you:
 - a) Use your previous experience ?
 - b) Refer to established procedures of intervention and transformation in the organization ? What are the procedures ?
 - c) Use a problem solving method methodology ? Which ones ?
 - d) Refer to books. Which books?
 - e) Consult with superiors? Who?
 - f) Consult with peers. Who ?
 - g) Consult with your staff. Who ?
 - h) Consult with outside people. Who ?

9. Make a different choice other than (a) to (h) above?
10. What methods/methodologies have you used ? How long have you been using these methods? When did you use them? What was your experience? What were the impacts? How do you know these impact from the method? Would you be interested in finding a better method ?
11. Have you found any limitations or difficulties with alternative approaches?
12. Have you looked into the consequences/impacts of your decisions/problem solving? Have you asked other people about the consequences for them ?
13. Do you think any of your previous decision making problem solving would have been more successful (or turned out differently) if you had consulted more widely or used a different approach? Can you explain this to me ?
14. How do you measure the success of decisions problem solving ?
15. Do you keep quantitative records which can indicate success or failure? e.g. such as growth of membership, turnover of members, output, productivity, complaints, disputers, absentecism reates, efficiency figures, accident rates, pollution, waste generation?
16. Do you think that all Le Group decision making/problem sovling, both your own and others, has been completely successful during your time at Le Group?
17. Do you have any decisions or problem concerning Le Group which you are facing at the present time?
18. Would you consider permitting me to apply a decision making methodology which I have adapted, called the BSM, to one or more of the decision presently confronting you? (I can explain the methodology step-by-step alongside your usual decision making if you prefer)

19. Are there any decisions/problems which you faced in the past which we could discuss in depth and on which I could apply my BSM methodology to see if a different course of action and different consequences could have resulted?
20. Would you be interested in learning how to use the BSM, and then using it yourself ?
21. Do you have a preference for individual or group meetins concerning discussion of decisions/problems, and use of BSM?



Appendix II: BSM Questions

Boundary Critique Questions

- (1) What currently motivates you and the other to define the issue at hand? What ought to be your/ their motivation?
- (2) Is covetousness, resentment or malice influencing you or others in defining the issue? If so, what might the issue look like from your or others point of view if these were removed?
- (3) Is lying, deceitfulness, slander or any other “improper” use of language involved being defined by you or others? If so, what might the issue look like from yours or other points of view if these were removed?
- (4) Is there any major misconduct (killing, stealing, etc.) linked with the issue? If so, should this be including as an integral part of defining the issue?
- (5) Is the issue being defined in a way that privileges your own concerns over wider social concerns? Is there a way to define the issue in a way that included a wider set of concerns, without making the issue impossible to address?
- (6) Is there idleness, apathy or avoidance of the issue? Who should be engaged with the issue and how?
- (7) Are there any misrepresentations of self, other or the non-human world in the definition of the issue? Have you tested out what you attribute to others by asking them? Should you do so, and if not, why not? If there are misrepresentations what might the issue look like from yours or other points of view if these were corrected?
- (8) Has the mental discipline of Buddhist thinking been applied sufficiently in defining the issue? If not, can further Buddhist systemic investigation be undertaken?

- (9) From the various points of view of those involved and (potentially) affected, what are the different possibilities for defining ‘middle paths’ between their ethical and practical concerns? What risks might be associated with different middle paths, and which one should be chosen?
- (10) From the various points of view of those involved and (potentially) affected, what cause-condition-effect relationships are important to understanding this issue? What are their potential consequences and the risks of ignoring them? Which should therefore be accounted for, and what conditions make this choice the right one?
- (11) From the various points of view of those involved and (potentially) affected, what cultural and ecological contexts are relevant to understanding the issue? What is your view in relation to these other view, and why?
- (12) From the various points of view of those involved and (potentially) affected, what time scale for dealing with this issue should be adopted, and why? What is your view in relation to these other view?

Choices of Theories and Methods Questions

- (1) What method(s) foster desirable motivations and inhibit undesirable ones (as defined through boundary critique)?
- (2) What method(s) will eliminate desirable or minimize any covetousness, resentment or malice you have to identified?
- (3) What method(s) eliminate or minimize any lying, deceitfulness, slander or any other ‘improper’ use of language you have identified?
- (4) What method(s) will tackle any major misconduct (killing, stealing, etc.) you have identified?

- (5) What method(s) will help in preventing a narrow set of concerns being privileged over wider social concerns, but without making the issue impossible to address?
- (6) What method(s) will work to counteract any idleness, apathy or avoidance that you have identified?
- (7) What method(s) will help to minimize misrepresentations of self, others or the non-human world?
- (8) What method(s) will help promote the mental discipline of Buddhist thinking, if this is not sufficiently in evidence?
- (9) What method(s) will support people in developing the middle path between ethical and practical imperatives identified through the boundary critique?
- (10) What method(s) will help people account for the key cause-condition- effect relationships identified through the boundary critique?
- (11) What method(s) will help people account for the key cultural and ecological contexts identified through the boundary critique, and will they work in those contexts?
- (12) What method(s) will work in the time scale specified in the boundary

Reflecting on recommendations for improvement

- (1) Are positive motivations embodied in the recommendations? If not, can they be improved?
- (2) Do the recommendations stem from covetousness, resentment or malice? If so, can they be improved upon in this regard?
- (3) Do the recommendations stem from lying, deceitfulness, slander or any other ‘improper’ use of language? If so, can they be improved upon in this regard?

- (4) Do the recommendations involve any major misconduct (killing, stealing, etc.)? If so, can this be eliminated?
- (5) Do the recommendations reflect wider social concerns either as well as, or instead of, narrower personal concerns? If not, can they be improved upon in this regard?
- (6) Do the recommendations identify the means to tackle idleness, apathy or avoidance (if these are potential problems)? If not, can they be improved upon in this regard?
- (7) Are the recommendations based on any misrepresentations of self, others or the non-human world? If so, can they be improved upon in this regard?
- (8) Do the recommendations reflect the mental discipline of Buddhist thinking? If not, can they be improved upon in this regard?
- (9) Do the recommendations reflect the middle path between ethical and practical imperatives identified through the boundary critique? If not, should they simply be improved, or is there a need to return to boundary critique to define a new middle path?
- (10) Do the recommendations account for the key cause-condition-effect relationships identified through the boundary critique? Do they identify ways to change these where possible and desirable?
- (11) Will the recommendations work in the cultural and ecological contexts identified through the boundary critique? If not, is there scope for changing these contexts (which could involve making further recommendations), or should the contexts be left as they are and the recommendations changed?
- (12) What time scale is needed to implement the recommendations, and is this realistic? If not, should the recommendations be amended to fit the time scale, or could they be extended to enable the adoption of a new time scale?