Factors that Influence Responsible Leadership in Singapore: an exploratory study

Carolyn Koh

A fall in Singapore's transparency rankings from number one in 2010 (least corrupted) to number 5 in 2012 has led to the growing concern that Singaporeans are demonstrating a lack of values and social capital and that the tension between wealth accumulation and ethics has caused some Singaporean leaders to make poor ethical decisions. Incidents of corruption and bribery have become more frequent in Singapore, which is puzzling because Singapore has always been governed using stringent rule-based policies. The question that this research would like to answer is if rule-based governance needs to be coupled with character development, so that Singaporean leaders will be able to draw on their personal values when faced with challenging decision-making dilemmas.

A review of the literature indicates that there is only one other contribution (Wimalasiri, Pavri & Jalil 1996)to the role that ethics plays in responsible leadership in Singapore ; this highlighted an obvious gap, which this study hopes to bridge.

The study will explore the personal, organisational and societal factors that affect responsible decision-making in Singapore. The plan is to conduct an exploratory study using face-to-face interviews with fifteen influential business leaders in Singapore and to develop case studies from the data collected. Based on the case studies, I shall use constructivist Grounded Theory to develop categories. I shall also compare these with current theories on responsible leadership as a form of further analysis to develop a model.

It is hoped that my findings will improve our understanding of how influential business leaders who operate in a high achieving and well-regulated social setting are able to generate responsible profits and to also shed light on the current state of affairs and on the role of personal values in terms of responsible leadership in Singapore. These results could perhaps help in the creation of pathways towards promoting character-based responsible leadership in Singapore.

References

Wimalasiri, J, Pavri,F,Jalil,A1996,'An Empirical Study of Moral Reasoning among Managers in Singapore',*Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 15, no.12, pp. 1331-1341,<http://philpapers.org/rec/WIMAES>.