



Applying holistic principles in management development

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Abstract

Purpose – In preparing managers for the uncertainty, threats and opportunities posed by the challenge of frequent and unexpected changes in organizations and markets, an alternative to a traditional Western viewpoint is a holistic approach that embodies balance and harmony, sees more subtle relationships and avoids the tensions of opposites. The purpose of this paper is to report the derivation and application of six holistic principles for management development (quieting the mind, harmony and balance, relinquishing the desire to control, transcending the ego, centeredness, and the power of softness) derived from a non-Western philosophy.

Design/methodology/approach – The six principles were implemented in a management development program in a small high-tech company. The reported effects upon the managers' role perceptions and behaviors were captured in immediate and delayed evaluations by means of face-to-face interviews.

Findings – The analysis of the interview data identified four underlying values that managers reported emerging from their involvement in the program: emotional awareness, shared perspectives, interpersonal sensitivity and benevolence and fulfilment.

Research limitations/implications – The research is an action-based single case study which was evaluated longitudinally using participants' perceptions. Further work is now required to apply these principles more widely and assess them using pre- and post-test measures of attitudes and behaviors and upward/360 degree assessments.

Practical implications – The broader impact of a holistic approach for management development in terms of personal and spiritual fulfilment as well as its significance of corporate issues is discussed.

Originality/value – The paper presents a challenging and innovative approach to developing managers holistically and provides a counterbalance to the predominant approach of much management education and development.

Keywords Leadership, Management development, Management philosophy, Oriental philosophy

Paper type Case study

Introduction

Meaningful management learning occurs where concepts meet experiences through inner and outer reflection, therefore management education needs to encompass but also go beyond teaching of the business functions and into a more natural way to organize learning based upon the zone where thoughtful thinking meets practical doing (see: Mintzberg and Gosling, 2002). A key for managers who enter this zone is managing of the self through a reflective and holistic mindset in which they learn to think in terms of creative tensions of "opposites" in a dynamic process. Ultimately this means managing through an awareness of one's own nature. Developing managers and leaders in this direction may be achieved by engaging learners in experiential,



self-expressive (which may include unusual or unexpected) activities for the purposes of thoughtful reflection and the generation of new insights. Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) cited examples of such activities ranging from drama workshops to discussions of ethics and spirituality, which they argue give participants the opportunity to focus on themselves, their lives, their work, their world and give them a better feel for managing themselves and others. The approaches suggested by Mintzberg, Gosling and others resonate with many Eastern cultures in which a holistic philosophy is embodied in a disposition towards self-reflection, self-investigation and self-development in pursuit of harmony in “body-mind” to obtain a state of “happiness and blessing” (Dychtwald, 1992).

The central precept of this case study project is that managers need to have an inner center to act as an anchor and source of gravity and calm through which they may acknowledge and accept the inherent tensions and paradoxes of, for example, rationality and intuition, creativity *and* control, and change and preservation (Autry, 1991). Unchanging core values based upon holistic principles may, paradoxically, allow flexibility and adjustment in a changing environment. Furthermore, meaningful organizational change and adaptation to new and challenging environments can happen much more easily if there is personal change by key stakeholders such as managers and leaders. Those managers who are exposed to a more holistic learning experience may be able to act from this centered state and thereby recognize, develop and use their full range of capacities – the “soft” and the “hard” – and in doing so cope better with personal, interpersonal, organizational and environmental challenges in turbulent times and also act with greater authenticity and integrity.

Inter-cultural aspects add an additional dimension to these arguments. Rather than there being “one best way of organizing” (usually the “Western” way) there are alternative approaches that may be drawn from other cultures and philosophies. One need look no further than the expansion of the Chinese economy for a very pressing and valid reason for managers in the West, if not to embrace, then at least to begin to understand some of beliefs and values that underpin the mindset behind East Asian business (Tung, 1994). However, interest in Eastern approaches goes beyond a utilitarian or market-based argument to a concern equally with the learning and development, and ultimately the spiritual (and in the sense we use it here this is *not* equated with the religious aspect of spirituality) fulfilment, of managers and leaders and the organizations of which they are a part.

If applied successfully some of the approaches outlined here have the potential to build organizations in which humanistic, and hence more ethical, principles are overtly recognized and fostered. Bolman and Deal (2003, p. 395) viewed the heart of many of the recent corporate scandals that have been witnessed as being the result of an erosion of the sense of what the organizations concerned “were” and what they stood for. Authenticity and ethical behaviors must rest in a “soul” which Bolman and Deal described in terms of the corporate sense of identity, beliefs and values and which, depending upon one’s frame of reference (and a plurality of frames is possible), might embody itself in:

- *authorship*: giving space within boundaries wherein leaders may increase their influence and build more productive organizations;
- *love*: confronting our own and others’ vulnerability as a sign of understanding and accepting the individual (Bolman and Deal, 2003, p. 402);

- *power*: paradoxically Bolman and Deal (2003, p. 406) argued that leaders who “hoard power produce powerless organizations” whereas giving power liberates employees’ productive energies; and
- *significance*: employees’ work should be perceived as worthy of their efforts.

If one accepts the values and beliefs that underpin these and related arguments the question arises of how the practice of manager and leader development might respond? There are many possibilities. One possibility which draws upon a non-Western philosophy is embodied in the words of the *Tao te Ching* which have operated as a “correct guiding discourse” for many centuries and for a significant portion of humanity (Hodge, 2002, p. 17). The aim of this project was to use the first-named author’s interpretation of certain aspects of the *Tao te Ching* as a guiding discourse for a manager and leader development program. It was hoped that by drawing upon the precepts of this text some of the attributes that are the hallmarks of a more holistic way of managing and organizing may be brought to the fore in the thoughts and actions of managers and leaders.

Holistic principles for management development

Holism is a philosophical concept, deriving from the Greek root *holos* meaning a whole with a value greater than the sum of its parts – a *Gestalt* of things. To be whole an organism should have the ability to “self-organize, including self-renewal and self-transcendence, but with the ability to be self-assertive and integrate with the whole” (Patterson, 1998: 288). The ancient Chinese texts the *I Ching* and the *Tao te Ching* both have holism, self-development and growth among their central precepts and see the purposes of life as learning and the expanding of one’s spirituality. For this reason one of these ancient texts, the *Tao te Ching*, was taken as the basis for this Case Study project.

Taoism’s central text is the *Tao te Ching* which is ascribed to Lao Tzu (an older contemporary of Confucius) but is more likely to be an anthology of chapters or wise sayings from approximately the fourth century BC. The *Tao te Ching* has had an influence on Chinese thought out of all proportion to its length (it is very short, so much so that it is sometimes referred to as “the book of five thousand characters”). From the verses of the *Tao te Ching* it is possible to identify a number of core principles for management development, and an attempt will be made to draw a comparison (a contrast) between the Taoist core principles and the work of the Western manager. In this paper there is a focus on the core capabilities of the “Taoist” leader that may provide values to underpin a managerial and leadership role for the twenty-first century which is more balanced than one that relies solely upon the traditional principles employed in business and management education in the West. These principles were derived from a reading of various translations of the texts and a personal interpretation of them in the context of management and organizational development (the classic English translation by Lau (1963) was the basis for the case study paper). The principles are described separately but in reality they overlap and inter-relate; in spite of this they each provide their own unique insight for the design of a holistic management development program. The six principles are:

- (1) quieting the mind;
- (2) harmony and balance;

- (3) relinquishing the desire to control;
- (4) transcending the ego;
- (5) centeredness; and
- (6) the power of softness.

Principle 1. Quieting the mind

The Taoist principle *mushin* refers to a state of “contemplation and quietism”. It is through emptying ourselves that we gain the greatest fullness (Smart, 1997, p. 257). By letting-go of any tension or doubt, fear or expectation, effort may turn into effortlessness and the ability to see through and into the essence of things may be developed. For example in Chapter 11 of the *Tao te Ching* is stated: “Cut out the doors and windows to make a room. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have use of the room.” The related notion of *wei-wu-wei* is “action-without-effort” in which nothing disrupts the natural flow and nothing exceeds the necessary. It expresses a lack of activity accompanied by an instinctive and intuitive response to the present moment (similar to the Buddhist notion of “mindfulness”) to the state that is now; it is an “action-that-lacks-activity”. There are many examples of this action through inaction and inner contemplation, for example creativity can flourish in the condition of “giving up control” when ideas are allowed to incubate as in Wallas’ (1926) classical model of the creative process. Scientists and artists often report breakthrough ideas surfacing when they had given up control of their minds and the examples of Archimedes, Darwin, Kekule and others are often cited. By practicing “emptying of the mind” the manager may allow new insights and intuitions to emerge, be more attuned to others’ reactions and become more effective by making less effort. The emptier from prejudices, anger, past experiences the manager is, the more attuned and effective he or she may become.

Principle 2. Harmony and balance

Chi is the energy between Yin and Yang and other opposites in life. Book 2 of the *Tao* refers to the force that operates between the Yin and the Yang: The *Tao te Ching* emphasizes the relationship between opposites and the balance between them, for example: “Something and nothing produce each other; The difficult and the easy complement each other; The long and the short offset each other” (see Chapter 2). From a Taoist perspective the essence of management lies in the manager’s Chi, and in making the Chi of herself and that of the employee more “flowing”. This might manifest itself as self-motivation and the ability to motivate others in a symbiotic relationship. Many managers feel a need to behave in a very proactive manner. From a Taoist perspective such extremes should be avoided, since they cannot coexist and create a balance because they put excess weight on one side or the other.

Principle 3. Relinquishing the desire to control

The *Tao te Ching* teaches that part of a deeper understanding is the recognition that it is not always possible to find a place to “stand firm”. The predicament of all life is uncertainty and contingency and we dream of eliminating uncertainty by rational means and conquering and controlling nature. Chaotic systems lie beyond our attempts at prediction, manipulation and control (Briggs and Peat, 1999, p. 7-8). Therefore, one must begin to feel comfortable with the reality of accepting a lack of control as part of

the “nature of nature” (see Chapter 57: “I prefer stillness and the people are rectified of themselves; I am not meddlesome and the people prosper of themselves”). The term “power” is a personal power that, rather than being a way to control others, is aimed to empower others in their jobs, in decision-making and so on. Control reduces one power in order to increase another one and results in a “zero sum game”. Empower in this sense means to give (up) the power to others in order to make them fulfilled.

Principle 4. Transcending the ego

One of the salient principles of Taoist wisdom is self-awareness and the accompanying recognition that decisive battle is not with the opponent, but with yourself. The “other” (for example: colleague, client or competitor) becomes your own mirror through which you can see your strengths and weaknesses. When we have educated ourselves and won the battle with ourselves, people will follow naturally, for example in Chapter 33: “He who overcomes others has force; He who overcomes himself is strong”. These words from the *Tao te Ching* suggest a principle in which shedding of the “I” and transcending the ego (in effect an anti-conspicuity principle) may paradoxically encourage follower-ship. For this purpose, the manager has to know how to be aware of herself and her weaknesses, shed any desire from herself to let the ego stand out and dominate.

Principle 5. Centeredness

The importance of the inner center (which may act as an anchor) may be seen as particularly critical in view of the constant change and uncertainty faced by managers. This requires the manager to be flexible in her or his functioning, but have a strong center to which to gravitate. Adjustment and functional flexibility are some of the salient characteristics of charismatic leadership (for example, House and Aditya, 1997). A strong center allows for flexibility and is analogous to the human body, where strong muscles and supple spine allow the athlete’s or dancer’s trained physique to make the most gentle and flexible movements with complete control. A center in the managerial sense may comprise a set of values that provide an anchor of honesty and integrity, and respect for oneself and for others. “Centeredness” in this sense means creating a focused reference for every activity that can be returned to in times of turbulence and pressure. Being in the center creates a balance and harmony among movements, gives self-confidence and presence to relationships and interactions even where there may be a state of resistance (Suler, 1993).

Maintaining emotional control in a crisis is an essential leadership skill. We remain centered in a crisis not by turning away but by being present; this helps us to deal with the turbulence and storms more effectively. Effective yielding requires the individual to be centered; otherwise yielding becomes an imbalanced or resisting action. Being in the center requires a measure of inner vitality and strength as the basis of yielding. It is important for the manager to have this center so that she is able to support herself, her colleagues and cope with changing situations and pressures from the environment; to be able to move and change because of and through the center. Our fast-paced western world often splits our consciousness with over stimulation and competing demands. As a result many managers “tune-out” as a result of stress and burnout. The centeredness principle calls for the managing of the here and now.

Principle 6. The power of softness

The “tough” manager is a stereotype and one that is sometimes equated with strength; softness, on the other hand, may be perceived as a weakness. The Tao leader experiences softness as flexibility and openness of body and mind: “Grass and trees are pliant and fragile when living, but dried and shrivelled when dead. Thus the hard and the strong are comrades of death; The supple and the weak are comrades of life” (Chapter 76). Softness towards employees or clients may turn out to be more effective because “a soft answer may turn away wrath”. Softness and sometimes yielding may ensure advance and “victory” in the longer term. This belief is exemplified in the “yielding-advancing” principle in the martial arts. Tai Chi (the art of “soft” warfare) reflects these principles and depends upon the acceptance of yielding to advance. Lack of flexibility may present difficulties in difficult and unpredictable situations and in such circumstances an overreaction may be a dysfunctional response.

These six principles were derived from an interpretation of the *Tao te Ching* and formed the basis of a holistic program that was designed and implemented by the first-named author in a series of management development workshops. The next section describes how the principles were applied with a group of managers in a medium sized high-tech company by the first-named author who herself integrates eastern philosophies such as Taoism and Buddhism and holistic methods into her practice.

The study

Research question

The objectives of the project were to:

- (1) apply the holistic principles outlined above in a management development context;
- (2) explore the ways in which such principles could be implemented;
- (3) evaluate participants’ immediate reactions to these activities;
- (4) gauge participants’ longer term perceptions of the impact that the program had on their leadership role; and
- (5) innovate a novel holistic approach for manager and leader development.

Method and participants

The participants in the program were a group of 15 team leaders employed in a medium-sized hi-tech company[1] The participants, ten men and five women, were in their mid twenties to early thirties. For all of them their role as team leader was their first management position. Their educational background was college graduate level, mostly in engineering but some of them were from the field of behavioral sciences and business. The human resources department of the employing organization nominated participants to the program for the purposes of manager and leader development. There were some limited administrative working relations amongst some of the members. In their positions they shared a common need to lead their teams effectively to achieve the company’s business goals. Many of the participants were engineers who had highly-tuned technical and analytical skills. All the participants shared an identified development need to complement these technical capabilities with “softer” skills, related to working with people, including motivational techniques, enhancing

self-esteem, but particularly empathetic leadership skills – attentiveness, acceptance, joining, and following.

The program

The overall goals of the program were developed in consultation with the client and were as follows:

- (1) developing the perception of the team leader’s role;
- (2) developing the necessary skills for the fulfilment of managerial responsibilities;
- (3) developing an understanding of one’s place in the organization; and
- (4) to develop specific issues such as leadership, motivation, teamwork, tutoring, and task management, developing the whole manager.

The program comprised seven one-day meetings spread over a period of 21 weeks facilitated by the first-named author. The content of program was in part “conventional” in that it aimed to prepare the team leaders for their newly acquired managerial position. To this end much of the taught content included traditional management and leadership topics focusing upon the managers’ role, leadership, motivation, dialogue and coaching. However, the method was unconventional in that the guiding principal was a holistic approach and particularly the need to introduce the “heart” (in addition to the “head”) as a managerial working tool. The issue of relationships in management and the importance of attentiveness to emotional aspects of the self and to the others were emphasized in the context of daily situations at work.

The aim of the program was for these qualities embodied in the six principles to constitute a basis for participants’ on-going workplace behavior. The program consisted of a number of activities each with one or more exercises and learning points (see Tables I-IV). The activities were preceded by an introduction to the concept of the union of contrasts:

- (1) expressing the holistic role of the manager as combining seemingly opposing forces;
- (2) the need to emphasize the softer component, which is sometimes missing in management;
- (3) creating a common terminology to facilitate understanding and communication; and
- (4) providing the participants with an overview of the activities.

More complete descriptions of the activities are available upon request from the first-named author.

Table I.
Activities and learning points for perceiving the manager’s role – transition from engineer to manager

Exercise and goals	Learning points
<i>Exercise: Meditation and guided imagination</i>	Empty mind
Learning a relaxation technique	Centeredness

Exercise and goals	Learning points
<p><i>Exercise: Leader-receiver</i> Self-awareness of the inner meaning of leading, through which to understand their interpretation of the receiver Awareness of the fact that leading and leadership are possible by learning, joining and promoting the other Touch as a holistic way to get to know the other</p>	<p>Shedding the ego – “I” versus “lack of I” in communication and influence Training in the empty mind allowing deep attentiveness Harmony between yielding and advancing The power of softness Sensitivity to own and the other’s center</p>
<p><i>Exercise: Pushing hands</i> Using the other’s energy to influence her Identifying one’s own and the other’s center Effective coping with conflicts</p>	<p>Centeredness Shedding the ego Giving up control The power of softness Yielding, joining and advancing</p>
<p><i>Exercise: The butterfly on the wrist (as in the above). Role-play</i> Problem solving in daily situations from the manager’s work in protected conditions. Possibility of learning through feedback Possibility of making one’s position more flexible and experiencing a behavior new to the manager</p>	<p>The play experience involves the human body, mind and spirit as a whole Yalowitz (1995) argues that play invites a creative adventure – both individually and as a group, and emotional laboratory for expressing and encouraging openness and learning new ways of communication, while bypassing consciousness, inhibitions and defences</p>

Table II.
 Activities and learning points for leadership, motivation and dialogue with the employee

Exercise and goals	Learning points
<p><i>Exercise: The rose</i> Understanding the differences in human perception Awareness of parallel projection bias</p>	<p>Reality is created in the eyes of the observer Subjectivity among the components of the whole Shedding the ego</p>
<p><i>Exercise: Reading chapters from The Little Prince</i> Using the metaphors in the story allows projection and identification by the manager, and learning</p>	<p>Use of questions and answers, as was done by the masters in the Zen stories Using symbols from the world of animals allows activating archetypes for the understanding of reality Through the story, the manager sheds her ego (“it isn’t me, but the prince”), frees her mind to be filled by learning, allows herself not to control the situation</p>
<p><i>Leading with a golden thread</i> Developing sensitivity to the other’s abilities Experiencing being the leader and the receiver, and the insights this leads to Developing imagination, creativity and enjoyment/motivation in leading</p>	<p>Using the body and movement to reflect an ability to make interpersonal contact Sensitivity to own and the other’s center The power of softness Joining and advancing Giving up control</p>

Table III.
 Activities and learning points for coaching

Exercise and goals	Learning points
<p><i>Exercise: Drawing</i> Introspection about the meaning of the management role to oneself Experiential opportunity to expose, share and receive feedback from others – creating openness and daring Returning to the inner child who hasn't allowed herself to draw for a long time – return to creativity</p>	<p>Empty mind Body, imagination and emotion work together in harmony</p>
<p><i>Exercise: Playing a percussion instrument</i> Creating space and opportunity for listening in a team Developing daring and originality in a new and changing environment Experiencing a development of harmonious work through listening to oneself and the others</p>	<p>Playing combines body, mind and spirit The power of softness Yielding, joining and advancing Empty mind Giving up control</p>
<p><i>Exercise: Writing a poem about the meaning of management in one's eyes</i> Deepening the insights reached so far Another way of personal and creative expression of the managerial "I"</p>	<p>Empty mind Activity through inactivity When the hand moves, the head doesn't think and the soul flourishes</p>

Table IV.
Activities and learning points for developing the holistic manager

Evaluation

An evaluation was carried out at the end of the final session to gauge participants' immediate reactions to their experiences. This was supplemented by a final evaluation four months after the program had finished in order to assess participants' perspectives on the longer-term impact that the program had on themselves and their performance.

Immediate evaluation. One of the aims of the program was to expand the participants' understanding of the managerial role from a holistic perspective. At the end of the program it was not possible to assess the extent to which it impacted upon their perception of their job role behaviors, and this question was left for the delayed evaluation (see below). The use of a standard reaction level evaluation form was considered but this was rejected in favor of allowing the participants to tell us more directly. Therefore, at the end of the final day of the program participants were asked by the facilitator to answer, by means of a short discussion, the following open ended question: "How much do you think the tools used in the workshops have contributed to your understanding of your job as a manager?" Seven of the participants were randomly selected to respond to this question (referred to below as A-G). Responses were noted in Hebrew and subsequently were translated into English by a native Hebrew speaker whose second language was English. The facilitator (again a native Hebrew speaker whose second language is English) reviewed the translations and made any appropriate minor modifications. All responses were treated anonymously.

The second-named author analyzed the responses to the question thematically (in terms of words, groups of words or whole phrases) through a series of readings and re-readings of the texts in order to identify broad content areas that appeared to have

emerged in participants' comments (for a discussion of this method see: Allard-Poesi et al., 2001, p. 360). On the basis of an initial reading through a number of themes were identified which were then validated and modified by a second reading. On the basis of a third reading participant's responses were assigned to particular themes. This *ex post* analysis revealed three themes:

- (1) sensitivity and relationships;
- (2) holistic perspectives; and
- (3) heightened awareness.

As a check on the validity of the analysis the facilitator reviewed the themes, categorization and the assignation of responses; appropriate minor modifications were made. The responses in each of these categories are given below. The responses describe participants' initial responses: they do not allude to the application of the newly acquired knowledge and skills to their workplace activities but are an immediate reaction (see: Kirkpatrick, 1975) to a novel and unusual developmental experience. As further check an independent researcher reviewed the labelling of the categories and the assignation of responses to these categories; no changes were judged to be necessary. This method was also employed in the delayed evaluation.

Sensitivity and relationships. A number of the participants raised issues related to their own feelings and emotions, their feelings towards others and inner emotional resources. The main issue raised was that of the role of sensitivity and emotion in work situations and the ways in which difficult situations might be faced:

Management is in fact about relationships. We practiced acceptance, mutual respect and sensitivity in work situations. It was important (G). It was interesting to discover myself in "frightening" situations and I faced it with courage (E). I understood that being a manager is not so much about theories and models, but using the [personal] materials you have (F).

Holistic perspective. There were a number of issues raised by participants in relation to the ways in which the exercises facilitated their taking new and different perspectives. For example, taking a broader and more holistic perspective and not concentrating upon single issues in isolation, and the way different meanings might thus be generated:

Helped understand something broad, and not just a single point (A).

Every example and demonstration in itself has emphasized a small point and made it into something more meaningful, gently, as during most of the time [when] you addressed things (A).

The leading exercises demonstrated a point in a different way and were good for variation and shedding light on the point (C).

The role of some of the exercises in breaking out of existing routines was important but not accepted willingly: "Meditation interrupted [my] routine" (C); "I initially resisted the drawing, but it was a success, opened doors and drew out good things" (C).

The main issue raised was that of taking a broader perspective and the perceived importance of breaking out of existing routines and individuals' habitual ways of thinking and solving problems.

Heightened awareness. The stereotypical view of the engineer/manager is of the sequential, analytical and logical thinker and whilst it is acknowledged that these are

crucial attributes, the program aimed to foster a broader less localized thinking strategies. The other issue that participants raised was the role of the activities in raising their awareness of the issues of insight and creativity and “thinking like a child” again:

These tools helped me come out of my line of sharp, clear and intellectual thinking and give reign to imagination, a field in which I’m not so strong, in particular the rose, the drawing, the poem (B).

They constituted a return to the child within us (D).

They contributed greatly to the delivering of the message, feeling and insight (A).

The holistic ideas made their way inside (D).

The field of creativity has potentially increased and wonderful things came out, which I didn’t think I had in me (B).

Immediate evaluations are informative especially with regard to the credibility of the program but they may be subject to “halo” effects and other sources of bias and hence may be less reliable than longer-term (delayed) evaluations. Moreover it is not possible for participants to comment on the impact of the program upon their job performance in an immediate evaluation. Hence it was necessary to conduct a delayed evaluation.

Delayed evaluation (approximately four months). The method and procedure for the delayed evaluation was the same as for the immediate evaluation. Thirteen participants took part in the face-to-face interviews for the delayed evaluation (referred to as participants A to M). The question that participants were asked was: “What has been the impact of the program on your role as a manager”? In this case the *ex post* analysis revealed the following themes:

- emotional awareness;
- shared perspectives;
- interpersonal sensitivity; and
- benevolence and fulfilment.

As a check on the validity of the second-named author’s analysis the first-named author reviewed the themes, categorization and the assignment of responses; appropriate minor modifications were made. As further check an independent researcher reviewed the labelling of the categories and the assignment of responses to these categories. This resulted in minor modifications to the labels of two categories. No changes to the assignment of responses to the various categories were suggested or made. The delayed evaluation responses contain deeper and more penetrating reflections and insights than those revealed by the immediate evaluation. From a reading of these categorized responses a set of values that underpinned participants’ delayed reactions to the program and its impact upon their job role were identified.

Emotional awareness. In a similar way to the insights revealed by the immediate evaluation, emotions and feelings figured prominently in the delayed evaluation. The need to overcome personal fears and to try to put these fears to one side and work overcome their potential negative effects figured in some responses. The role of sensing and feeling also was important for Participant C who recognized a need to resolve the tensions between what was felt and how she/he acted. Participants saw the role of

feelings and emotions as being an important part of their role as a manager, and this was perhaps something that they, as stereotypical “data-rational types”, maybe had overlooked or felt compelled to largely ignore. The underpinning value that appeared to have emerged was interpreted as an “emotional awareness”, i.e. the sense of being more connected to their emotions and feelings.

I learned to talk directly and patiently with no fear (B).

I am more connected to my senses and this makes me take decisions from what “feels right” . . . this helped me to reduce the gap between the outer behaviour and inner feelings (C).

You learn about your fears and anxieties. This means asking in myself “what in this person makes me fear or to please?” My need to listen to myself grew (M).

Shared perspectives. Over half of the interviewees identified different viewpoints or shifts in perspective as an important outcome for them. This involved stepping back and looking from the outside in at themselves and others in order to develop alternative personal viewpoints – referred to as a shared perspective. The other aspect was trying to shift perspectives in order to see things as others see them and thereby try to understand the viewpoints of others:

Today I have a different approach, from out inwards . . . when facing a problem I move out of my own cycle observe the situation from out in and react accordingly (B).

I learned to take a step back and still handle the situation (C).

Management is not only about tasks; it is not only a “multiplication table”. I realized I must see a person as a mixture of needs, priorities and desires that I have to be aware of (D).

I now know that what is most important is what is behind the mask, how the employee thinks (E).

I am able to see not just myself, I take a step back, not expect what I expect, understand the person and observe the situation from his place (I).

If you want output you should recognize and understand what he [the employee] needs. To understand what he is going through so you know where you can give in (J).

Management is about understanding what is behind each one [employee] to be open to flow with him, trust him, see him as a whole. This reduces resistance and increases effectiveness (K).

Management is looking at yourself from another angle, from where others look at you. When you are complete with yourself you reflect confidence in others (K).

Try to understand and advance with the other’s idea . . . I learn from my employees (L).

Interpersonal sensitivity. Participants acknowledge the role that the ego or personal image had upon their management and leadership style and the limitations that this may bring. The responses appear to suggest that the managers’ preferred leadership style was a directive and authoritative one in which decisions were made in a top down manner in order to preserve the managers’ power. Moving away from this stance entailed a shift in behavior, to let go of the ego in order to act more authentically without a protective veil, and thereby gain support and also allow others to develop.

The underpinning value that appeared to have emerged was “inter-personal sensitivity”.

I have a responsibility towards others; as a result at times I must “swallow” my ego” (A).

I broke the “super team leader image”; by expressing weaknesses I am able to halt their expansion of a “situation” and get team support at the same time. I do not need this “shield” any more (C).

Management involves handing a part of me outwards and this sometimes calls for me to halt, think “softly”, which is against my instinct (E).

Today I have a much better understanding of my limitations. I do not try to impress others anymore (G).

Today I manage out of awareness ... I am able to handle the situation without my ego (I).

I moved from the pole of doing things alone and explaining to the last detail, my employees turned out to be a copy of me, to being the pole where I trust my team members, understand my role as to give a wider picture of the tasks (L).

Benevolence and fulfilment. Greater empathy also appeared to be an important outcome for some participants with the recognition that employees well being and satisfaction is an important way of supporting the achievement of organizational and team goals. These were seen as important needs of the employee that should be fulfilled. Furthermore there was the recognition that empathy and performance are not antithetical. The underpinning value was “benevolence”.

My task is to make a person happy and satisfied, this way everyone will benefit (A).

Today I feel a need for serenity and calmness at the personal and group level (A).

Now I am more aware of things like the need to coach and take care of them from their point of view – in the past I missed these things (B).

The goal in management is to make people feel content, allow them to grow, even with complicated challenges, so that in the end they will feel ownership of the results (I).

Interviewees appeared to recognize unforeseen personal and developmental opportunities as a significant outcome of the program for them and also the opportunity that they as managers have to facilitate the development of others. This involved the recognition of personal learning and development needs, identifying opportunities to meet those needs and, in the eyes of interviewee H, facilitating the development of others, of love and respect. The underpinning value was “fulfilment”.

I realize that it is necessary to be calm in order to succeed; no I wish to practice yoga and meditation in order to develop this part in me (E).

The manager’s role is to transform the employee; to create reachable challenges ... It means a consistent self-improvement, emotionally and professionally ... to check with myself constantly how I grow in the role ... a manager will have self-significance if he will love and accept himself, then he will be able to distribute it with no fear (H).

Discussion and conclusions

From a reading of managers' delayed reactions to the program there appear to be four core values that emerged through the responses that were observed:

- (1) *emotional awareness* not only to personal feelings but to how one's feeling and actions might affect the feelings of others also;
- (2) *shared perspectives* of one's own perspective and that of others – seeing the world through someone else's eyes and seeing oneself through their eyes also;
- (3) *interpersonal sensitivity* in one's own ability to the extent that it is possible to “let go”, and in others' abilities to the extent that it is possible to give up tasks and responsibilities to others – to delegate and empower;
- (4) *benevolence* embodying a concern for one's own well being and for that of others; and
- (5) *fulfilment* by being receptive to the need to change, learn and develop and to enable this change in others also.

The six guiding principles for this developmental experience were:

- (1) quieting the mind;
- (2) harmony; and balance;
- (3) relinquishing the desire to control;
- (4) transcending the ego;
- (5) centeredness; and
- (6) the power of softness.

The principles drew upon Taoism in order to raise managers' awareness of core values that may help them to become more in accord with themselves, those around them and their changing environment. While current approaches in management emphasize traits and behaviors adapted from external knowledge this paper has emphasized some of the inner values. The inner values of emotional awareness, shared perspectives, interpersonal sensitivity and benevolence and fulfilment represent core qualities that a manager may bring to complex, dynamic and uncertain workplaces. For example, the value of benevolence may be seen as a core quality of ethical management (Confucianists view “the Way” as an ethical principle – see Wenfeng and Shaojie, 1991, p. 161). These values are linked to holistic principles that serve specific developmental goals (Figure 1). As noted earlier Western principles and values have tended to predominate in organizational life; our argument is that the development of the holistic manager requires a greater recognition of non-Western assumptions and values in order to become more “centered” and for organizations to become more spiritually (in a non-religious sense) focused.

The managers that took part in the development program were exposed to what the first author refers to as “mind by-pass tools” since some of the activities aimed to connect them with more holistic modes of thinking-and-being beyond cognition and the natural compulsion to reduce, analyze and dichotomize, and often ignore the body. From the analysis of the feedback it appeared that that exposure to the various activities that have been described in this case study created a perceived change in participants' ways of thinking and acting as managers. These findings suggest to us

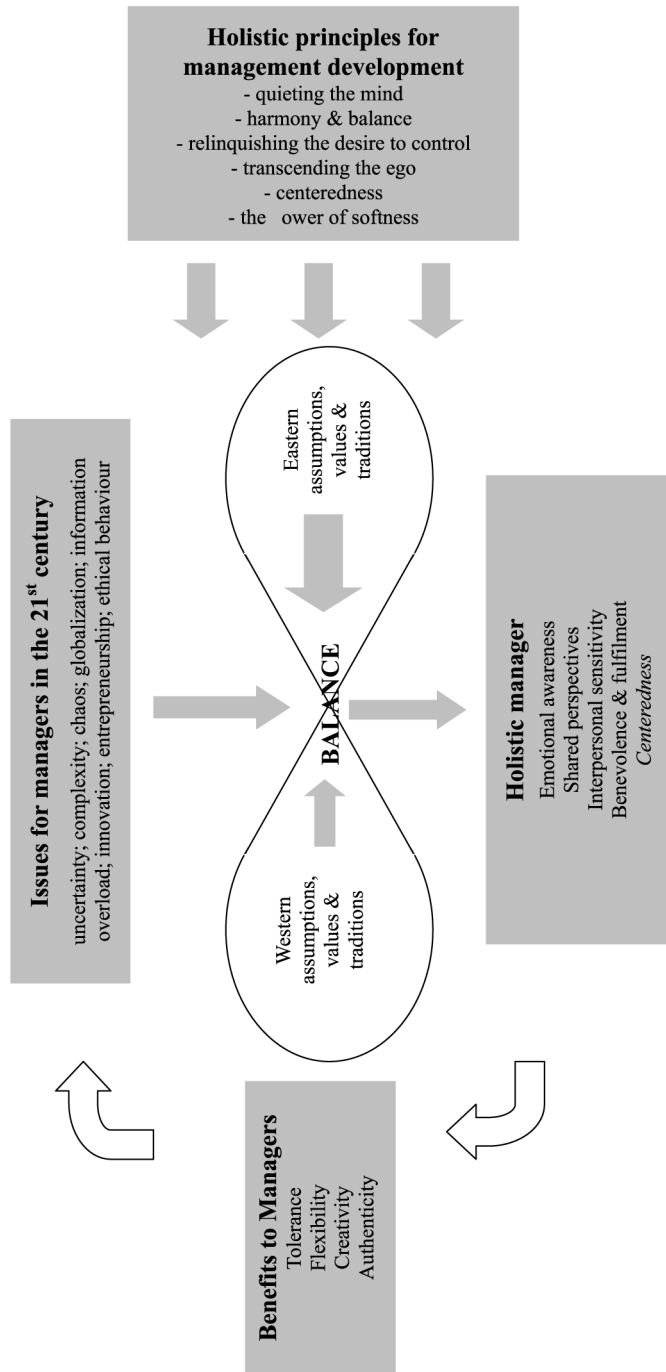


Figure 1.
Holistic model for management development

that there is scope to borrow ideas from non-Western philosophies and apply them to the managerial job role or leadership function. This is not a new idea and in this regard Taoist philosophy and the principles derived from it provide an inner anchor or spiritual focal point, which is practical, relevant and immediately useful to the manager's role. The principles relate to inner values that are necessary, and that may constitute a foundation for the identification of important managerial traits and behaviors that may characterize the holistic manager. The core of the approach is the centeredness that may be achieved by acknowledging and accepting the complementarity of opposites.

The limits of current approaches to management learning, the imperative of creativity in management development and the need to continuously refine and develop the techniques available to management development practitioners suggest that there is a need to develop managers in a holistic manner (including the spiritual dimension). This is especially true given that many aspects of the technological society in which we live often may mean that the rational mode of thinking is presented as being superior to an intuitive mode, the paradox is that human nature and the natural world in which we must live in harmony is not becoming more abstract and analytical (Frisch, 2000, p. 674) but rather more complex and chaotic (Briggs and Peat, 1999). Underlying these claims is our view that there are common themes within a "universal leadership" that have value across Eastern and Western divides and are based on universal humanistic and spiritual values such as compassion, love, caring respect, meaning and service and manifest themselves in managerial capacities and behaviors. These spiritual values transcend the individual and the group to the organization and beyond in a process of upward spiralling through a complex human/environmental field (Wendler, 1996, p. 837).

Certainly it is possible for individual managers to be exposed to the methods outlined here in order to raise their personal awareness of the various possibilities of such a leadership. It is worth noting that the methods were credible (there was every chance that with a conventional group they would not be perceived as such). The managers who participated in the program may themselves work within existing structures where these allow. However, the experience may be transformational to the extent that it may surface conflicts between their values (and behaviors) and the structure and culture of the organization. This potential source of tension is certainly something that any organization needs to be cognizant of before it embarks on such a program. It might be possible to embody some of the principles discussed here, or indeed those outlined by Bolman and Deal (2003) (i.e. authority, love, power and significance) in the behavioral expectations for individual managers. A test of the extent to which any development program has been successful in this regard might be through an upward- or 360 degree-appraisal (moreover this in itself may be a learning process for the appraisers – bosses and subordinates).

But what might an organization look like in which these principles were embodied? This is both a more grandiose project than our small-scale case study. In terms of its implementation in many organizations it would require a degree of re-orientation of current systems which themselves may be built upon tacit philosophies, deeply-seated mental models and grooved thinking that may need to be articulated, surfaced and challenged. The wisdom of leaving the organization's underlying values and beliefs as un-articulated and assumed is perhaps a questionable one, especially in the light of

recent corporate history. Whether the desirable values for the first decades of the twenty-first century would be those of a reframed organization (Bolman and Deal, 2003), a learning organization (Pedler *et al.*, 1997) or even a spiritual organization (see Zohar and Marshall, 1999) is an open one which scholars and practitioners need to jointly explore. Whatever the answer to this question, the approach outlined here may offer some tools and techniques for use at the individual level. But in reflecting upon the value of this case study project we are reminded that living and working with exclusively Western or Euro-centric mind-sets may no longer be an option for managers in the twenty-first century. This paper has described some tools that may permit an engagement with a wider world of personal and spiritual fulfilment and which may provide greater inner peace, calm, meaning, purpose and will-power in managers' lives (see Mitroff, 2003).

Note

1. In order to protect the identity of the participants certain details of the research setting have been disguised.

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Further reading

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