

The Challenge of Mission-Driven Business Education in China

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China, experiencing a lasting rapid growth is confronted with many critical challenges, the handling of which has an impact far beyond the frontier of its huge territory. The strong hand of the government - fully aware of the dysfunctional consequences of this forceful race for growth - is engaged in a vigorous process of change to guide, monitor and control the transformation dynamics. The effectiveness of such a process is closely linked to corporate behavior, to a large extent an outcome of the way business leaders and managers define their role and implement their responsibilities. They are in position of power, given the influence they have on their firm's behavior and given the role played by the corporation in today's society (in China as everywhere). Business schools, educating corporate leaders and managers, are privileged vehicles and powerful instruments in influencing leaders and managers values, developing character and shaping mindsets. They must be mission-driven in the pursuit of their educational objectives and in their function of change agents.

Following an introduction on the situation in China today, we will explore how to implement a mission-driven approach to management education in China, in an environment where the transfer of European or American practices may prove to be inefficient and possibly ineffective. We will open a discussion on alternatives and on the role of mission-driven business schools in China.

The dynamics of China's development, its race to growth, its progressive integration in the globalization process have captured the attention of the media worldwide. Chinese leaders have been effective in ensuring that their pride for their achievements is shared by their fellow citizens, the forthcoming Olympics providing a great opportunity to beat the drum of success and to reposition China as the great power it used to be.

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For China, the road to re-building its might has been – over a long period of time - a bumpy one, but the fast pace of economic growth in the last three decades has delivered a powerful economic engine that worries many around the world. It is not only the export drive, the greedy acquisition of natural resources to fuel the development engine, the damage to the environment, the slow internalization of the intellectual property concept, the modest concern given to safety and human life (e.g. in mining and manufacturing) or the limited interest in labor and human rights that draws the West’s attention to China: it is the realization that China seems to hold on – in its successful competitive behavior – to a different societal and managerial paradigm. Indeed, the Chinese “renaissance” seems to be built on an effective blend of the Chinese San Fa principles with western imports, producing an original hybrid not observable anywhere else in the world. Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism seem to have made possible an adaptation process – over centuries – of values and behaviors not dissimilar to the conditions observed during the Renaissance in Europe... It was this fertilization (or fusion) of the Roman Catholic tradition with the Greek rationality (“Faith with Reason” of Thomas Aquinas) that induced the Renaissance and today one may wonder whether the San Fa (3 philosophies) principles impregnated by Western scientific rationality is not on the way to produce a transformation of the Chinese society – a “Renaissance” type - conducive to innovation². After a long and painful period of internal turbulence, the leitmotiv given by Deng Xiaoping opened a new way of looking at the individual-society interdependence, mediated through the market (strongly guided by the hand of the government).

This race for growth, this thirst for catching up under government guidance - through the entrepreneurial drive of millions of SMEs, the government’s sponsoring of SOEs and the huge flow of FDI with the resulting benefit of a transfer of technology – has produced the economic dynamism that keeps amazing the world. The availability of cheap land and labor (disciplined and hardworking) and the emphasis on education has produced a workforce able to work “hard and smart”, while the values vacuum has induced a money making race where greed could become the accepted means to the glory of getting rich. In an environment where values have

² The debate is a lively one between those who see – in today China – the seeds of a social fabric and process conducive to social, technological, product and process innovation and those who express little optimism as far as the innovation capacity is concerned, given the education process, the command and control approach in management and some social practices. See: Zeng, M. & Williamson, P., Dragons at Your Door, Boston, Harvard Business School Press, 2007

been questioned or destroyed (e.g. during the Cultural Revolution), where religion has taken a back seat and the communist ideology has become dusty, only material success – measured through the yardstick of money - seems to be driving individual behavior.

Teleopathy and its consequences –

The single pursuit of one goal, the “unbalanced pursuit of purpose”, the obsession with a single objective has the dramatic consequences we know (Goodpaster, 2007), and if the socio-economic achievement of China has lifted more than 300 million of Chinese farmers out of poverty it has also exploited externalities at a huge cost to society and to the planet. The relentless pursuit of growth fueled the lack of respect for Gaia – made easier thanks to widespread corruption and by the incentive system to reward civil servants –has been conducive to the dramatic destruction of the environment. Furthermore, a weak institutional framework, a lack of checks and balance and an inefficient legal implementation have produced a society where everything is negotiable. The government’s attempt to develop “the harmonious society” – where, in particular, the rule of law would substitute to the personal discretionary power of the greedy civil servants – is fraught with difficulties.

The results of this thirst for growth, without implemented rules of the game, are visible - far beyond the destruction of the environment - through the lack of respect for intellectual property (fakes and piracy), the lack of enforcement of safety regulations (with dramatic accidents and losses of human life - e.g. in mining and manufacturing), the poor quality of products (with major product defects – e.g. in food and drugs), and the omnipresence of bribery and corruption. The government, fully aware of the shortcomings of the current functioning of the regulatory context - and sensitive to international criticism - is very keen to improve the functioning of the economy and of society. Its commitment to the building of “the harmonious society”, its multiplication of regulatory efforts, its emphasis on cleaning up the environment (beyond the Olympics period), pursuit of white-collar criminals in the vast bribery landscape are clear signs of its will to bring about change. The results, though increasingly visible, are often modest, as the government’s capacity to rule such a vast land, so culturally and economically diverse, remain well below its ambition (and also below its needs).

Change is bound to happen given the dramatic situation in some areas (e.g. extreme pollution in certain regions), grassroots revolts in the countryside (e.g. against local civil servants' abuse of power) and urban citizen movements (e.g. against city transportation or waste management projects). The rising use of modern communication technology (e.g. internet, mobile phones) and increasing travel opportunities are hampering government's efforts to keep controlling the evolution of docile citizen's attitudes and behavior. This is illustrated by the government's uphill battle to control the web.

Any need for change?

Child labor, intellectual property loss, defective products, mining accidents, bribery and corruption, pollution and environment destruction and human rights abuses, are all symptoms of a society in transition, actively engaged in a process of transformation from a very poor agrarian to a post-industrial society "with Chinese characteristics".

Such a process of change –which took European societies two centuries – China is trying to achieve in less than 50 years, in immense country, with 1.35 billion people and, probably culturally more diverse than Europe. The task is huge, the pride is enormous and the receptivity to lessons given by Europeans not immense. Were not the Europeans that brought opium, imposed the unequal treaties and looted the Summer Palace... and now they want to give us lessons?

The business schools as change agents -

How can we encourage and facilitate a process of change, to induce a reflection on values and their relevance to discipline purpose, where do we start? Obviously the role of the government is primordial. The government drives change through the education system (and the values it promotes), through the legal and regulatory framework (and the values behind) the government imposes rules upon the functioning of society and upon business practices; through the messages (exhortations in public speeches, publications and in the media) it gives to its citizens and eventually through its own behavior (role models of civil servants at national, regional and local levels).

Professional experience has taught me that change (individual and social) is less difficult to induce if initiated from a position of power. In today's societies the corporation is the main value-creation institution: it innovates, creates jobs, manufactures or sells products and services, contributes to the community, pays taxes, etc... Given its multi-role in society the corporation has much power and individuals at the top, business leaders, have a great impact not only in shaping their firm's strategy but in influencing society through their corporate activities and its impact on the environment. Many of these corporate leaders and their managers have acquired or developed their management skills in business schools. Hence the importance of business schools as a or "the" privileged vehicle in influencing, in "programming" decision-makers, in wiring managers in a certain way through their MBA and EMBA programmes or their executive education process in general.

Business schools and their responsibility -

A Mission-Driven business school cannot shy away from its responsibility. The often heard argument (even from Deans) - that "at the age of our MBAs their values are already defined and business schools have no real influence on the "values" held by managers coming to enhance their professional competences" -reflects a lack of realism and is tainted by irresponsibility. This is why, fully aware of the speed of growth of the Chinese economy and of the huge impact it will have on the rest of the world, concerned about the difference in values underlying Chinese corporate and individual behavior, I have engaged in a search for ways to alleviate the tension and decrease the problems our grandchildren will face in handling the challenges of China. If Europeans and Americans do not significantly enhance their capacity to understand China (its history, its values, concerns, problems and vision of the world) then tensions between China and the world are bound to grow and to become more problematic for both sides. As China is experiencing a dramatic period of transformation, it is timely to explore how to bring a (modest) contribution to such process of change. To make this possible – given my experience and professional background and history – I decided to contribute a few years of my life to be a small cog in a complex change machine operated by the Chinese government. A business school seemed to be, for my purpose, the best entry point, as business schools – particularly in an emerging economy – have a significant capacity to influence and change the country's business

leaders and managers' mindset. I selected a leading business school in China, independent, open to innovation and willing to take some risk.

Business schools today, with the flow of critics they have elicited over the last few years (Ghoshal, S., 2005; Mintzberg, 2002; Pfeffer, J. & Fong C.T., 2002; Bennis W. & O'Toole, J., 2005) and the debate they have generated, have no excuse in avoiding their responsibility in influencing and shaping the mindset of those who – trusting them – come to learn from them. Young MBA students and corporations sending their high potential executives have confidence in business schools' capacity to transfer knowledge, to share expertise, to develop skills and to promote certain sets of attitudes. This is part of their mission.

Business schools in China -

Given the situation in China today – as mentioned earlier (e.g. in terms of environment, safety and health, intellectual property, corporate transparency and governance) – it is a categorical imperative to enhance a sense of responsibility, particularly at the top. The mission of business schools – in China like elsewhere – should be to produce and share relevant knowledge, to educate leaders and managers who will internalize their responsibility and contribute to avoiding further loss of human lives on the work site, piracy of intellectual property, environment deterioration and other dysfunctional consequences of a race for growth that disregards accountability and ignores responsibility. Business schools - like any educational institution - have a duty to make their mission explicit: to develop responsible leaders (plenty of examples make clear that leadership and responsibility are not necessarily associated!) and managers, to make them aware of their duty to society (that give them the license to operate), committed to sustainable development (that ensures the survival of future generations of tenants of our planet), and globally responsible for the consequences of their value-creation corporate and individual behavior.

Implementing change through management education in China -

The challenge is in the “implementation” of a mission-driven institution within an environment that privileges the *how* rather than the *why*, that wants practical advice, tools, recipes rather than a reflection on values, a debate about the purpose of the firm or the relevance of spirituality in

business. In such an environment – particularly in working with EMBAAs - where the “bottom line” does not need to be tripled, where development can be sustainable only when one is rich, where the ends justify the means, where money has become the main - if not only - yardstick of performance and success, the teaching of corporate or individual responsibility can become a challenge.

How can we anchor a debate on the value of values? Should one call on Confucius, Mencius, Mo Zi, Sun Tzu or on Aristotle, Plato, Hobbes and Marx? The reference to the Western tradition in ethics is often seen as irrelevant, the call on traditional Chinese philosophy or the San Fa tradition is viewed as obsolete. But one (or several) frameworks has to be selected to anchor a reflection and to discuss dilemmas faced by leaders and managers. However, between Socrates and Confucius, between an entry into the responsibility issue through Western references or through eastern approaches, a choice may have to be made in order to have less difficulty in drawing the attention of the class (or part of it). Perhaps, it is not an “either-or” approach that can be effective but rather the use of “and” (or “both”), i.e. to discuss how different philosophical trends help to frame the issue. So if defining the problem as an either-or alternative is ineffective, one could try to capture the interest of the manager by structuring the teaching around issues and specific problems: for example, environmental pollution, product safety, accounting transparency, bribery, insider trading, workers’ rights, top executives’ compensation, deceptive advertising, selling methods, etc... Another way could be to structure the course around preventive and curative approaches: role of the law, role of codes of conduct, role of education and training, functions of whistle-blowing, role of sanctions, or role of “values”, etc... In this way we deal with the key dimensions associated with attempts to enhance responsible behavior (at the corporate, group or individual level): the importance of “values”. Which values to teach? Western, Chinese, Japanese, American, German, Italian. Or, a third approach could be to present business ethics instrumentally, i.e. as a box of tools.

In Chinese business schools – when working with EMBA participants (age 35-50) we tend to find the two dominant ethical paradigms so common in Europe:

- a) *The relativist*: “there is nothing right or wrong per se: it depends...”; “It depends where you are, in the US or in China, in Canada or in Korea... there is nothing universally right

or wrong: it depends...”; “Everything is relative...”; “I follow local customs...”; “When in Rome do as the Romans”

- b) *The utilitarian*: “I look at alternative consequences and I always choose the one that is best for the bottom line”; “I always choose what maximizes shareholder value...”; “I look at what pays off the most...”; “I always look at cost-benefit and choose the one that pays off the best...”; “the end justifies the means...”

The third approach:

The Chinese deontologist: is a rare bird (some say oxymoron...) as Kant did not elicit many disciples in China (so far!).

Needless to say, then, that teaching ethics (or Globally Responsible Leadership) –particularly in China - is and will remain a challenge. Perhaps, a road to be explored is to use an approach through the teaching of “rites”, following Confucius and his emphasis on the good observance of rituals that – if regularly and well practiced – is the quality of the gentleman.

There seems to be 4 conditions – particularly important in China - necessary to alleviate the difficulties that arise when teaching in this field and to capture the attention of managers:

- 1 – A good insight in the specific group of managers or leaders’ mindset and experience in order to understand expectations and define the initial entry mode (the *expectations* as defining the learning situation).
- 2 – A good selection of current issues and cases studies, relevant to today’s China (*technology* as a learning media)
- 3 – A teaching style that encourages – through discussion and role play – active participation to “engage” managers (the *teacher* as a learning instrument).
- 4 – The instructor’s must have insight into both his/her own culture (and values) *and* those of the Chinese.

Why should we engage in such “mission”?

The “why” to engage in this mission is clearly evident. First the need is there, as mentioned earlier. Second, the government wants to promote more responsibility through the development of “the harmonious society”, a society that does not destroy the harmony with nature through dysfunctional corporate behavior (e.g. pollution), where policies and management actions

contribute to reduce current huge income gaps, where CSR is strongly encouraged (and now incentivized), etc... Third, foreign pressure - through the implementation of global standards, through the demands of multinational corporations for a level playing field based on agreed upon common rules of the game, through international organizations and NGO whistle-blowing (e.g. about human and/or labor rights) – pushes for change toward a more effective internalization of corporate and individual responsibility.

The issue is “how”, how to encourage business to account more for responsibility. Business schools are a privileged means to that end. In other words: how to teach “responsible leadership”, CSR, business ethics, governance and sustainable development, corporate citizenship to Chinese managers? With MBAs it is less of a challenge, as the young generation – the so called Y generation (born in the 80s) – is keen to learn, thirsty for rapid success and searching. For middle and senior management, it is more difficult. Before engaging in my “teaching” mission, I was given some advice such as: “Do not talk about sensitive issues such as religion (a taboo subject, since the falun gong events), bribery and corruption (which can be useful, as no other country has grown as quickly in the last 30 years, while relying effectively on a “norm of reciprocity” that the West labels corruption), western philosophy (difficult to understand and probably irrelevant), avoid politics, do not criticize the government, etc... But if you wish to capture the attention of the managers start with the benefits of CSR (in terms of profit, over a period of time), with the danger of being caught in case of non-compliance (e.g. non respect of the law), demonstrate that CSR quickly improves the bottom line (it pays to be socially responsible), give them tools for brand building (through the development of a good brand image), call on the moral of Confucius (applying Confucian principles in today corporate situation), invite them to return to San Fa approaches (coming from Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism). The challenge: how can someone from the West - who does not even speak Chinese – tell me that I should use traditional Chinese philosophy to increase my bottom line, to cope with a fierce global competition, to deal with local competitors (who succeed through their capacity to cut corners), to manage my uneducated migrant workers, to pay taxes, etc... Still I see relevance in organizing learning with reference to Confucius, Mencius, Mo Zi and other Chinese philosophers. As we have developed earlier (de Bettignies, H.C., & Tan, C.K.,

2007), some fundamentals of the Confucian moral can be relevant in a society groping for values to give a moral spine to its development.

The relevance of Confucius and Mencius -

“Among the various Chinese philosophies and religions that have shaped beliefs of ethical behavior and responsible leadership, Confucius (*Kongzi* 孔子, 551-479 B.C.) has been the most influential (much beyond China).

Confucius emphasized *virtue* as the goal, benevolence, human-heartedness, and the *role model* of the leader being one who walked the talk. He used the term “*gentleman*” (*chün tzu* 君子) to refer to a virtuous person with a strong moral character. The gentleman is the Confucian ideal moral character³, while the “*small man*” (*hsiao jen* 小人) is the opposite moral term. Since the gentleman is the ideal moral character, a man can become a gentleman only after much hard work or cultivation. Benevolence (*jen* 仁) is the most important moral quality or virtue a gentleman must possess (Confucius, 1992, p.xiv-xv). He would not sacrifice benevolence for other things such as wealth and honor. According to *The Analects* (*Lun yü* 论语), which is attributed to Confucius, “[...] *The gentleman never deserts benevolence, not even for as long as it takes to eat a meal. [...]*” (4:5)⁴ (Confucius, 1992, p.29). *Chung* (忠) and *shu* (恕) are the two components of benevolence. *Chung* is the doing of one’s best, whereas *shu* is the method of discovering what other people wish or do not wish done to them. It is through *chung* that one puts into effect what one has found out by the method of *shu* (Confucius, 1992, p.xv-xvi). A benevolent man does not impose on others what he himself does not desire (12:2, 15:24) (Confucius, 1992, p.109 and p.155).

³ For Confucius, there is not just one but quite a variety of ideal characters. The highest moral character is the sage (*sheng jen* 圣人), but that ideal character is so high that it is hardly ever realized (Confucius, 1992, p.xiii). Confucius said that he dared not claim to be a sage himself (7:34) and had not met such a man (7:26) (Confucius, 1992, p.65 and p.63).

⁴ For references made to Confucian sayings in *The Analects*, the first number denotes the chapter in Confucius, *The Analects* (*Lun Yü*), trans. Lau D. C., 1992. The second number refers to the saying number in that chapter.

Confucius believed that “*one who is not benevolent cannot remain long in straitened circumstances⁵, nor can he remain long in easy circumstances*” (4:2) (Confucius, 1992, p.29).

Besides benevolence, there are several other virtues that a gentleman is expected to possess. Two important virtues are wisdom (*chih* 知) and courage (*yung* 勇) (Confucius, 1992, p.xxii). According to Confucius, benevolence, wisdom and courage are the “*three things constantly on the lips of the gentleman*” (14:28) (Confucius, 1992, p.141). That saying clearly underlines the importance of the three virtues in Confucian ethics. To the gentleman, virtues are far more important than material possessions. In Confucius’ words, “*The gentleman seeks neither a full belly nor a comfortable home. He is quick in action but cautious in speech. He goes to men possessed of the Way⁶ to have himself put right. Such a man can be described as eager to learn*” (1:14) (Confucius, 1992, p.7).

The goal of the gentleman should be virtue (*te* 德), not profit (*li* 利). In the words of Confucius:

“*If one is guided by profit in one’s actions, one will incur much ill will*” (4:12) (Confucius, 1992, p.31);

“*The gentleman is versed in what is moral. The small man is versed in what is profitable*” (4:16) (Confucius, 1992, p.33); and

“*It is shameful to make salary your sole object, irrespective of whether the Way prevails in the state or not*” (14:1) (Confucius, 1992, p.133).

Furthermore, affluence and status should not be obtained unethically, i.e. at the expense of virtue. In Confucius’ opinion, “*Wealth and high station are what men desire, but unless I got them in the right way, I would not abide in them*” (4:5) (Confucius, 1992, p.29).

⁵ That is, in difficult situations of poverty and hardship.

⁶ The Way (*tao* 道) refers to moral principles.

Mencius (*Mengzi* 孟子, 371-289 B.C.), regarded as the greatest thinker of Confucianism after Confucius, advocated righteousness (*yi* 义) over profit (*li* 利). In his words, “*What is the point of mentioning the word ‘profit’? All that matters is that there should be benevolence and rightness. [...] if profit is put before rightness, there is no satisfaction short of total usurpation*” (1A:1⁷) (Mencius, 2004, p.3). Moreover, both philosophers believed that a person nurtured with the right values would not be easily misled by negative, external influences. In Confucius’ words, “*If a man were to set his heart on benevolence, he would be free from evil*” (4:4) (Confucius, 1992, p.29). And according to Mencius, “*[...] he who is equipped with every virtue cannot be led astray by a wicked world*” (7B:10) (Mencius, 2004, p.159).

Confucius’ message is still alive -

Although his teachings were conceived long ago, Confucius is alive, particularly because his moral is immanent and not concerned with transcendental issues. Moreover, it is very profound and rich yet easy to understand. For instance, Confucius believes that: a man is perfectible through continuous effort and continuous education; moral education will develop his inner virtue; and social harmony can be attained through the cultivation of the individual and of a virtuous government (Deverge, 1983). The Confucian morale has evolved and “adapted” over the centuries.

In essence, the key messages of the Confucian morale are self-cultivation (or self-discipline), social harmony, strong family, reverence for education, virtue being more important than professional competence, and the importance of moral leadership in politics (Deverge, 1983; Tu, 1991). This Confucian confidence in the ability of humans to keep on learning and improving, whether young or old, is prescient and centuries ahead of his time as numerous contemporary neuroscience studies have confirmed that even ageing brains can learn.

⁷ For references made to Mencius’s beliefs, the first number refers to the chapter in Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Lau D. C., 2004. The second number denotes the paragraph number in that chapter.

Within the family and the group, Confucianism emphasizes the cultivation of the individual, i.e. *self-cultivation*, which is to govern oneself in order to govern the house properly. Self-cultivation encompasses the learning of gentleness and self-control (which includes avoiding raw emotion and impulsive reaction). A man is judged by the way he fits into the standard pattern of the group. Moreover, politeness is not courtesy, but adherence to a formal model: a gentleman is a man of “virtue” (Deverge, 1983).

Confucian ethics specifies proper behavior between superiors and subordinates, between family members, and among friends. *Social harmony* is achieved through Confucius’ “five relations” (*wu lun* 五伦): (i) Ruler – Subject⁸; (ii) Father – Son; (iii) Elder brother – Younger brother; (iv) Husband – Wife; and (v) among Friends (Deverge, 1983). The first four relations are vertical (i.e. superior-subordinate in nature), while the fifth one among friends is the only horizontal relationship that is built on mutuality. Social order is preserved through each person’s adherence to his/her responsibilities and expected behavior in his/her ascribed role.

Moreover, Confucianism stresses the importance of *strong family* in society. The family is the basic unit and formal model for society (Deverge, 1983). Relationships within the family are formally defined. The head of the family (or the “prince”) returns benevolence to the other family members in exchange for their respect and obedience.

In addition, reverence for education is a fundamental belief in Confucian ethics. It advocates respect for teachers and scholars, who are traditionally the prominent class in status (but not financially). Great importance is placed on examinations, academic achievements and diplomas. Textbooks teach filial piety, duty, diligence, successful study and acceptance of authority. Furthermore, the school is the privileged place for one to make lifelong friends (Deverge, 1983), i.e. to initiate one’s own *guanxi* or personal connections.

⁸ A subject is also known as a minister.

If Confucius brought into the classroom elicits skepticism among some students, the government is currently rehabilitating its relevance and one can understand why, particularly in the education of leaders and managers.

Firstly, Confucius stressed above all the concept of *jen*. *Jen* also means one's love for his fellow men (12:22) (Confucius, 1992, p.117). According to Confucius, he would like *“to bring peace to the old, to have trust in (his) friends, and to cherish the young”* (5:26) (Confucius, 1992, p.45). Moreover, *“A young man should be a good son at home and an obedient young man abroad, sparing of speech but trustworthy in what he says, and should love the multitude at large but cultivate the friendship of his fellow men”* (1:6) (Confucius, 1992, p.3). Confucius advocated altruism (*shu* 恕) over self-interest. According to him, *“a benevolent man helps others to take their stand in that he himself wishes to take his stand, and gets others there in that he himself wishes to get there”* (6:30) (Confucius, 1992, p.55). That is, he helps others to achieve what he wishes to achieve for himself.

Besides loving his fellow men, a gentleman should also know his fellow men and *“Raise the straight and set them over the crooked. This can make the crooked straight”* (12:22) (Confucius, 1992, p.117). According to Confucius, a leader is expected to take care of and urge moral behavior on his followers. In Confucius' words, *“The gentleman helps others to effect what is good; he does not help them to effect what is bad. The small man does the opposite”* (12:16) (Confucius, 1992, p.115), and *“[...] By nature the gentleman is like wind and the small man like grass. Let the wind sweep over the grass and it is sure to bend”* (12:19) (Confucius, 1992, p.115). Besides being benevolent to his fellow men, Confucianism advocates that a gentleman should also care for and be generous (*hui* 惠) to the common people (5:16) (Confucius, 1992, p.41). The recent national reaction to the Sichuan earthquake illustrates this.

At the same time, Confucius believed that everyone should recognize his appropriate status. According to him, government is about *“let(ting) the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father, the son a son”* (12:11) (Confucius, 1992, p.113). One should be conscious of one's own position in life in relation to others (such as one's seniors). In fact, *“In serving one's*

lord, one should approach one's duties with reverence (*ching* 敬) and relegate reward to second place" (15:38) (Confucius, 1992, p.159).

Moreover, a leader should focus on hard work and perseverance. In Confucius' words, "*In the daily round do not show weariness, and when there is action to be taken, do your best*" (12:14) (Confucius, 1992, p.115). Furthermore, Confucianism strongly believes that leaders should act in accordance to what they preach, i.e. walk the talk. Otherwise, followers will not trust them.

According to Confucius, a gentleman "*puts into effect his words (yen 言) before allowing them to follow the deed (hsing 行)*" (2:13) (Confucius, 1992, p.15) and "*is ashamed when the words he utters outstrip his deeds*" (14:27) (Confucius, 1992, p.141). Moreover, "*seeing what ought to be done, to leave it undone shows a lack of courage*" (2:24) (Confucius, 1992, p.17), which further shows that a leader is expected to lead by example, even if he may suffer from negative consequences in carrying out an act that is morally right.

In addition, Confucian ethics would be skeptical about the use of corporate codes of conduct as a device for promoting a humane order, believing that no code can ever substitute for a leader's actions (Koehn, 2001, p.44). Confucius believed that governments or leaders should lead by virtue, rather than by law and punishment. According to him, "*Guide them by edicts, keep them in line with punishments, and the common people will stay out of trouble but will have no sense of shame. Guide them by virtue, keep them in line with the rites, and they will, besides having a sense of shame, reform themselves*" (2:3) (Confucius, 1992, p.11).

Furthermore, Confucianism's emphasis on the importance of education is very relevant to leadership today, as a leader needs to be knowledgeable in order to "*investigate things*" and make good decisions. But in Confucian ethics, there is little desire to upset the balance or status quo of one's own environment.

Some critics have questioned the relevance of Confucian values in educating leaders and managers. They feel that Confucianism is a conservative philosophy that acts as an impediment to change. Moreover, it suggests a rigid, hierarchical and vertical society. In emphasizing

learning over thinking, it limits innovativeness and creativity. Furthermore in business, it encourages centralization and authoritarianism.

However, when in the West, we hear of the necessity to develop “servant leadership” (Atruy, 2004) or “level 5 leaders” (Collins, 2001), it is possible to see how some core values of Confucianism could be leveraged in leadership education. These include: self-cultivation; the idea of the self as a center of relationships; an overriding concern for family stability; the importance of moral leadership in politics; communal harmony in society; systematic savings in the economy; and the belief in the unity of humanity and Heaven. According to Tu (1991), these Confucian perspectives are conducive to a less individualistic, less self-interested, and less adversarial mode of interaction. Confucianism is not only a *“less legalistic approach to modernity but also an authentic possibility of a thoroughly modern and yet significantly different cultural form. Indeed, it is neither individualist capitalism nor collectivist socialism, but a humanism that has accepted market economy without undermining the leadership of central government and rejected class struggle without abandoning the principle of equality.”* Furthermore, the success of East Asian economies *“indicates that a non-Protestant, non-individualistic, and non-Western form of modernity is not only conceivable but also practicable. [...] The Confucian ethic has helped East Asia to develop its unique cultural form of modernization because it has successfully adapted itself to the modern age.”* The positive experiences of East Asian countries add credibility to the relevance of Confucian ethics in educating Chinese leaders and managers.

Apart from Confucius and Mencius, the philosophy of Laotze provides further support for the teaching of ethics. This is because its central thesis is that Nature is founded on Balance or Harmony, hence its Yin-Yang paradigm. Nature hates extreme measures and will always punish those that go overboard.

Examples of business disasters on a global scale in recent years, from Enron and Worldcom to the Subprime crisis, are those of business leaders pursuing the logic of their business models a step too far – some would even say, to illogical extremes.

Teaching ethics in China -

Empirical studies suggest that individuals' interest toward ethics is currently not vibrant in China. *“Research on business ethics in China began in the first half of the 1990s and scholarship on business ethics in China has been growing for nearly ten years”* (Lu, 2006, p.12). Several reasons contribute to explain the situation in China. China has been under a communist regime for a long time. Responsibility was more attributed to the State, which was supposed to create the conditions for a long-lasting iron rice bowl. On the other hand, in certain other parts of the Asia Pacific region, checks and balances to detect and sanction dishonest behavior may be more well-established and stringently enforced, as it is the case in Singapore (where there is a high concentration of overseas Chinese), and these tough measures help to discourage unethical behavior. In China, the generation born in the 1950s was the victim of the Cultural Revolution, had its education hampered and its ethics affected by the experience of the formative years. The younger-generation of Chinese, pampered in one-child families, is the first generation to really experience the urban emergence of a consumption society. On the road to affluence, they are driven by quick gains and material success where ethics is not a priority.

A course in ethics may not change a student's or a manager's values, a full MBA or EMBA program does. The objective of teaching a full course in ethics or CSR may not be to change the students' values but to enhance their awareness of and ability to identify ethical issues. As Hosmer (1985, p.19) put it, *“I do not want to teach moral standards; I want to teach a method of moral reasoning through complex ethical issues so that the students can apply the moral standards they have.”* He further explained that *“the intent of most courses in this area (business ethics) is not to develop a special set of (moral) standards, but to assist students to logically be able to apply their own standards”* (Hosmer, 1985, p.20).

Indeed, several empirical studies have found that business ethics courses could improve students' abilities to recognize ethical issues or their moral reasoning abilities. Using students enrolled in a business ethics course at an American university as their sample, Murphy and Boatright (1994) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the efficacy of the ethics course. The students, who were mostly business majors, were asked to evaluate 25 scenarios in terms of the extent that each

raised an ethical issue in the respondent's opinion. Results showed that the course had a positive effect on the students' abilities to identify the presence of ethical issues.

Furthermore, the findings of two recent longitudinal studies on the impact of business ethics courses on students in China also suggest that such courses can raise students' awareness to ethical issues. Wu C. F. (2003) surveyed a sample of business students at one university in Taiwan and another in Mainland China. The students were asked to respond to items in a questionnaire that measured their ethical inclinations. It was found that after the students took a business ethics course, they showed significant improvements in the ethical weighting of their individual values, their recognition of ethical issues and their performance as ethical decision-makers in the scenarios tested. In Woodbine (2005), it was reported that the moral reasoning ability – based on responses in scenarios involving ethical dilemmas – of a sample of accounting students at another university in China improved significantly after the students took a business ethics course.

The work of Professor Georges Enderle and his colleague Professor Xiaohe Lu from the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences – with their publication of the proceedings of the International Conference on “Developing Business Ethics in China” held in 2002 – is very explicit on the potential of the development of teaching of business ethics in China (Lu and Enderle, 2006). Indeed, based on the existing literature, it appears that there are excellent reasons to promote business ethics education in China.” (de Bettignies, H.C., & Tan, C.K., 2007)

The teaching of responsibility – individual and corporate – to Chinese leaders (both present and future ones in the business, public and political arenas) is likely to bring a modest, but still meaningful, contribution to alleviate the negative externalities of the current situation. Business ethics education, courses on CSR could possibly influence (some) Chinese leaders, inducing them to look beyond their self-interest and the *maximization* of shareholder value, and to internalize further their responsibility toward all stakeholders, including the wider community and the environment we live in.

On that road, in spite of the often encountered skepticism, I believe that to call on Chinese philosophy is not only relevant but instrumental to anchor the Chinese leader or manager behavior in a moral context that is known.

CONCLUSION –

Yes business schools must be “mission-driven” and explicit about their mission. Their mission – at the MBA level - is not just to produce graduates with a heavy bag of tools, technicians of management, “technocrats” convinced that with science and technology all problems can be solved, experts in handling the latest models of consumer behavior and marketing strategies for reaching vulnerable market segments, skilful in the use of efficiency enhancing methods and experts in achieving corporate effectiveness through creative accounting and sophisticated financial engineering. Business schools’ mission should include helping students and managers to become more aware of the dilemmas they necessarily meet in business. They should also make it easier for them to define the values that will guide them in defining moments and more generally to handle the dilemmas faced in their professional and private life. A mission-driven business school should have as a purpose to develop men and women of character, able to manage (and possibly to resist) the corporate pressures to cut corners for quarterly results, able to have the long view that sustainable development requires, with an effective moral compass to navigate in the turbulent and grey area of business decisions. Those strong individuals, with clear values are in great demand in China. A recent study of the Aspen Institute and Guanghua School of management tells us that “although over 40% of students say their business school is preparing them “a lot” to manage values conflicts, just 27% “strongly agree” that they are learning to analyze the potential impacts of their decisions on all stakeholders and just 19% “strongly agree” that they have opportunities to practice ethical/responsible decision making as part of their MBA programs...”⁹ Business schools – whether they subscribe or not to the PRME - can bring a significant contribution to enhance globally responsible leadership and individuals with a sense of mission can be the much needed facilitators. Even in China.

⁹ Aspen Institute (Center for Business Education & Guanghua School of Management, Where will they Lead? China 2008, p 5

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