REVISITING COMMON SENSE LEADERSHIP: A CHINESE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast findings of Chinese business leaders with those from a previous study of the United States' business leaders. Eastern philosophical differences related to Western cultural/ethical business principles became evident in the observations of the Chinese participants. The previous study explored the definition and practice of common sense leadership in a 21st century organization. This current qualitative study was conducted from March through September 2012, involving 15 business leader participants from different provinces in mainland China. These leaders indicated that common sense is not easily identified, has a fluid nature to its standards, and involves personal attention. The participants concluded that best practice, common sense leadership methods involved harmonious working conditions, personal recognition, cultural understanding, and trend analysis.

INTRODUCTION

It has been repeated many times that "common sense is not common." It is a notion that receives smiles and raised eyebrows when these researchers note they are challenging that perspective within the context of leadership study. While the literature cannot provide a specific, agreed upon definition of common sense (Polanyi, 1966; Fletcher, 1984; Brooks & Highhouse, 2006; Motowidlo, Hooper & Jackson, 2006; Stemler & Sternberg, 2006; Clawson, 2009; Godwin, 2009; Moon, 2009; Rausch, 2009; Salter & Highhouse, 2009, and Zhao, 2009), it is quite obvious that those in government, the popular press, and ordinary citizens are specific to what is and what is not common sense in everyday situations.

Why is there such a gap between the definition and application aspect of common sense, and how does that then connect with areas of leadership practice? Another question that the researchers was interested in is why there are few people in the field of management who are exploring common sense leadership traits when it seems so intertwined with transformational leadership skills. Prior to our study results being released (Webber, Goussak & Ser, 2012, 2013), there had been a three year gap of academic work in the area of recognizing common sense (Clawson, 2009; Godwin, 2009; Moon, 2009; Rausch, 2009; Salter & Highhouse, 2009, and Zhao, 2009). Before that, Cockerell (2008) framed common sense around his experiences at Disney and suggested ten leadership strategies that were applicable. A few years prior to that, common sense notions were examined on a limited basis (Brooks & Highhouse, 2006; Motowidlo, Hooper & Jackson, 2006; Stemler & Sternberg, 2006) with gaps in the literature evidenced by pioneers in the field who attempted to first raise the issue of what is common sense

(Polanyi, 1966; Fletcher, 1984). The researchers take the discussion past the examination of what is common sense (and whether it exists) to note how an individual recognizes its presence and what benchmarks exemplify best practices in an organization (Webber, et al., 2012; 2013).

The study on common sense leadership included a review of United States shared managerial experiences and practices with the expectation of taking the study to other regions of the world to determine where similar and dissimilar notions were revealed by participants. The researchers wanted to discover a shared linkage between all cultures to note any variables that might indicate there are customary practices that would be globally applicable to those in senior management. A small sample was engaged to find indications of such collective practice with the notion that further empirical work could be performed on subjects once patterns were identified and compared. After conducting the US study, it was thought that Western Europe would be the next investigative location for the study because of cultural resemblances with the US, minimal barriers to communication, and a perceived understanding of the terminology. Following that work, Eastern Europe, then Africa, would be chosen to gain a global perspective on common sense leadership issues. However, the researchers were presented with an immediate academic and business exchange opportunity in China, matching available resources at the time with the aspiration of pursuing a significant opportunity for leadership inquiry in a major developing global nation.

The researchers' previous studies (Webber, et al., 2012, 2013), examined how 26 senior leaders defined and practiced common sense in their 21st century organizations. Webber et al. concluded that while there was no agreed upon term that best describes common sense, one could readily recognize its imprint on organizational practice. The executives in the previous study group indicated that key common sense leadership practices involved "managing your human assets; doing the right thing; seeing the big picture; developing a plan for the future; and making the right hiring and transitional decisions" (Webber, et al., 2013). The following summarizes the findings of a similar group of Chinese business executives who revisited the previous studies' two questions on how common sense leadership is defined and what are the best practices that should be followed by organizational leadership.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

As was noted in the previous work (Webber, et al., 2012, 2013), the inquiry into common sense practices began subsequent to one of the researchers speaking at a global leadership conference in Ukraine (2007). Although these emerging business and government leaders were attentive, and appreciated the Western perspective on management practices, the speaker recognized an opportunity for applied research. There was a knowledge gap shown between what was advocated to improve their organizations' poor business practices and how to use various leadership theories to make the change permanent. There seemed to be an overlooked hitch between theory and actual practice. So as not to diminish the speaker's expert influence with the participants, it was necessary to address the factors of the identified knowledge gap. Upon reflection, the missing element was surmised to be common sense leadership principles that needed to be added to the leadership program. However, there was a lack of scholarly research inquiry into such issues. Thus, seminal work was begun to initiate the academic conversation to gain insights into common sense leadership.

The research began with making sure the research question was framed correctly so superfluous work was not engaged. There was also an assumption that common sense had a readily identified set of definitions, which had universal connections. However, it soon became evident that such a paradigm did not exist in the academic or organizational world. In fact, the only thing that seemed to be agreed upon by all respondents was that "common sense is not common" (Webber, et al., 2012). There was not one single definition for common sense that could be agreed upon from all parties in the research project as being appropriate. Instead, the researchers discovered there were many opinions on how to recognize commons sense, which did not always show agreement by authorities in the field (Webber, et al.). Information on common sense leadership was all but non-existent.

The participants in the two previous US-published works grouped the recognition of common sense into three broad categories: goal setting, decision-making, and motivation (Webber, et al., 2012). While the senior executives in our study could not define the exact meaning of common sense, they could clearly relate best practices from their lived experiences. Those focus areas were "leading by example; managing your human assets; doing the right thing; seeing the big picture; making the right hiring and transitional decisions; and developing a plan that works" (Webber, et al., 2013).

The researchers then wanted to know if the findings from the US senior executives would be different from similar leaders in another region of the world. China was chosen as the first location for the expansion of the study with the other global locations being considered to perform future study for reasons previously stated. The selection of a convenience sample was challenging because of language differences and an understanding of survey wording. Researchers noted issues related to the selection of participants who at first did not consider their position to be at the senior level even though their position on the organizational chart would indicate otherwise. Despite such obstacles, participants showed a genuine interest in being part of a study on commons sense leadership, which compares and contrasts their responses with those of another global market leader country's perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to fully comprehend the mindset of common sense business practices in China, an understanding of an important cultural paradigm is required. That concept is Guanxi, which is a complex cultural structure with interactions in Chinese social and business environments (Bedford, 2011). Guanxi relies on the relationship from networking connections to secure favors in business and personal relations (Fan, Woodbine, & Scully, 2012; Zhu, 2009; Yeh & Xu, 2010). Fang (2011) and Yenhui (2011) contended guanxi is a management instrument that positively influences an organization's social responsibility. Guanxi denotes a trustworthy long-term relationship and may facilitate business collaboration in an effective manner (McNally, 2011). However, guanxi processes both contradictory and complementary theoretical modes, or good guanxi and backdoor guanxi (Bedford, 2011; McNally).

Though guanxi has created a framework that allows people to obtain the desired resources, under the loose legal environment in the Chinese society, guanxi has negatively influenced business ethics (Yeh & Xu, 2010). Guanxi orientations maintain a weak linkage with corporate ethics and may lead to unethical business behaviors (Fan, Woodbine, & Scully, 2012).

The evolution of leadership thought has been primarily evaluated from the Western cultural perspective. Although Eastern cultural philosophy has influenced leadership thought for at least as long as Western perspectives, the comparative impact of Eastern leadership with Western thought in this global economic marketplace may identify opportunities for more effective leadership styles.

As noted in a previous study of common sense leadership, Webber, et al. (2012) assessed the responses of 26 senior executives related to the understanding of and importance of common sense leadership. Among the conclusions drawn from this study, the level of employee motivation was directly related to goal attainment and decision-making, as well as the leader's sense of morality.

Traditional Western leadership styles are generally viewed from the Classical Era of the late 19th century and early 20th century, heavily influenced by the Scientific Management Approach of Taylor, and Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, the Administrative Theory of Fayol's principles of administration and Weber's bureaucratic form of organization. These management perspectives were geared toward efficiencies of the organization, and less concerned with the effective leadership concerns of the employees.

As management theories evolved in the mid-20th century, a Human Relations Era gave rise to the realization that effective leadership would improve the productivity of the worker. The Behavioral School was influenced by the work of Follett, Barnard's Functions of the Executive, Muensterberg's development of industrial psychology, and Mayo's seminal work in the Hawthorne Studies. As the 20th century moved forward, management viewpoints evolved to a Human Resources Era approach, including Drucker's Management by Objectives (MBO) and Blanchard's 1-minute Manager techniques.

A short recap of major contributors to common sense leadership, as noted in the Webber study, includes Fletcher's (1984) and Goodwin's (2009) views emphasizing the environmental importance for common sense leadership. Salter and Highhouse (2009) introduced the concept of situational judgment to common sense leadership. Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson (2007) further elaborated on the influence of situational factors in their Situational Leadership Model.

Iles and Feng (2011) examined the role of distributed leadership in team performance. The organization and workforce have transitioned to a more global and team-based focus, in contrast to the early organization systems of the Classical Era of Taylor's day, or the somewhat enlightened views of the Human Relations Era and Human Resources Era of the latter 20th century. The need to recognize the passing of the "leader/follower" model of leadership theory to that of a distributed leadership context has begun to emerge. Iles and Feng identified the importance of information processing as an integral element of effective leadership in the distributed leadership approach. They also noted the fact that distributed leadership might be more prevalent in Chinese teams than Western teams, as a direct result of the cultural difference in managing information.

Sharlow, Langenhoff, Bhatti, Spiers, and Cummings (2009)investigated the effectiveness of leadership taken as a group learning effort. Sharlow et al. described the need of healthcare leaders to develop innovative approaches to dealing with complex issues that were not much different from those faced by leaders in all organizations: funding, government policies, customer demands and expectations, as well

as demographic changes and the economy. The Leadership Development Initiative (LDI) described in their study included leadership training sessions that produced the "Four Pillars of Leadership" that identified 1) clarity of vision and purpose, 2) act with integrity, 3) inspire others to do their best, and 4) foster mutual understanding (p. 321).

Olivares, Peterson, and Hess (2007) conducted research on a sample of US Army officers, utilizing a questionnaire to gather leadership development experiences to determine the utility of beneficial and non-beneficial experiences. The phenomenological study added to the literature on the connection between experience and leadership. The essence of military organizational effectiveness is founded on the leadership qualities of interpersonal skills and cultural awareness. Olivares, Peterson and Hess connect the leadership development elements to mission, goal and strategy as a matter of systemic synergy.

Popper (2005) also developed a connection between leadership development within the context of experiences and learning. Popper further delineated the definition of leader and leadership, applying the traditional concepts of authority and power (derived from line management), and influence (assumed to be a quality of charisma or expertise appealing to the follower to carry out assignments without the coercive or punitive elements associated with authority and power).

Torpman (2004) investigated the evolution of leadership theory, from transactional leadership to transformational leadership. Torpman presented the logical progression of early Western leadership definition of trait theory/attribution of qualities represented in recognized successful leaders, through the behavioral theorist view of what actions represented effective leaders, to the situational leadership theories posited by Fiedler and others.

After considering the breadth of research about generalized leadership theory, one common conclusion is clear and that is common sense leadership is not common and that U.S. business executives believe that being a common sense leader is all about specific traits found within the leader (Webber & Goussak, 2012). The first important step is to understand that trait leadership is not an exact science. Tichy and Caldwell (2004) were some of the first researchers to narrow the study of leadership in terms of specific individual traits. A summarization of trait leadership focuses on individual success and a desire to continue bettering oneself and increasing one's trustworthiness among an organization (Northouse, 2007). General leadership traits according to Zenger and Folkman (2002) consist of five characteristics. The five characteristics include: (a) authenticity, (b) ability, (c) organizational results, (d) relationships, and (e) change. Zenger and Folkman believed that the foundation of a quality leader originates with the individual's authenticity and genuine behavior towards the organization and its members. The challenge the exists is the ability to demonstrate some type of relationship between general leadership theory, in this case trait leadership, to the specific components of common sense leadership.

Webber and Goussak (2012) found that emerging casino leaders of the 21st century demonstrated two specific common leadership traits: (a) the ability to effectively communicate within a team and to the individuals of that team and (b) the ability to motivate the team and those members towards

accomplishing common organizational goals. The ability to communicate begins when one is born, but that is not necessarily effective communication. Webber and Goussak found that effective communication focuses on being attentive to the needs of the team and those of the individual members of the team. In contrast, the ability to motivate people centers on the ability to positively engage the team in a common direction for the organization. Our previous work with U.S. business executives found that common sense leadership was based on three primary traits: (a) the ability to set goals, (b) the ability to make decisions and (c) the ability to motivate people (Webber, et al., 2013). It is becoming abundantly clear that common sense leadership is about positively affecting the team and the members of the team and not about the leader.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The previous US study used SurveyMonkey.com as the platform for the participants to provide their feedback on the questions proposed (Webber, et al., 2012; 2013). Consideration was given to use a similar methodology in the Chinese study. However, it was determined that an Internet based poll might not be a viable option due to possible technological and communication issues. Instead, the current study's interviews were conducted via email and phone calls with individuals selected using a convenience sampling of management level individuals who worked in mainland China.

Participants were recruited from organizations that the researchers had already developed a working relationship with who then recommended other individuals who met the criteria to be a part of the study. Individuals were screened for being a Chinese national and not an expatriate, being at least 18 years of age, and working in a management function or title within their organization

Most participants came from two main Chinese cities, Beijing and Shanghai. The study included private sector leaders from the design and printing, hospitality, manufacturing, mining, publication, and software industries. The original US study included individuals from both the public and private sector. The original study included leaders from information technology, insurance, investment, legal services, manufacturing, marketing, public utilities, real estate, restaurants, and staffing. Participants were polled from several regions of the United States.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, and no proprietary information was disseminated by the researchers or given to a third party. A coding system was used by the researchers to assure that interested parties of this study could not identify the private thoughts and suggestions raised by people who might be in their employment. Each subject was given a label to represent their China Participant (CP) project identification number. The collected data has limited access within the research team and is kept at a safe and secure location. It will be shredded three years from the publication of the current research study.

The original US qualitative study on defining and providing best practice, common sense leadership examples was conducted July 29th through December 7th, 2010. It involved 26 participants who were identified as senior leaders in their organization. The Chinese study on the same topics was performed from March through September, 2012. It involved 15 participants who were identified as business leaders in their organization.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data were manually recorded and transcribed from results obtained by the researchers using NVivo 9® qualitative data analysis software to analyze the data. The software assisted the researchers in the manual coding process to better analyze and identify similarities among the participants. Data was collected and then transcribed into NVivo 9® where the results were coded into major themes that emerged from the study.

The questions explored the lived experiences and perceptions of Chinese business leaders as a means to compare and contrast thoughts on what common sense leadership entails and how such practices can be identified in organizational practice. A qualitative, modified van Kaam phenomenological method of study was used to help the researchers group the ordinary experiences, perceptions, and viewpoints depicted in the results (Moustakas, 1994). This involved following a systematic approach that included listing answers and making preliminary data groupings, reducing and eliminating non-relevant information, as well as assembling and categorizing the uniform responses of the research subjects (Moustakas). The study was not concerned with measurements and quantitative explanations. Instead, the focus of the research was on meaning and lived experiences of the individual participants in the subject area (Moustakas).

The Chinese business leaders had a similar challenge in defining what common sense is, which was also identified in the previous study (Webber, et al., 2012). Our previous study (Webber, 2012), examined how 26 senior leaders defined common sense as it relates to the 21st century organization. Their conclusion was that while there was no agreed upon term that best describes common sense one could readily recognize its imprint on organizational practice (Webber, et al.). Although no agreed upon term could be found to describe common sense leadership, the group of U.S. leaders did point to three common characteristics: (a) goal setting, (b) decision making and (c) motivation that describe a common sense leader. The group of Chinese leaders pointed to three prominent conclusions on how one defines common sense in a 21st century leadership context: it is not easily identified, has a fluid nature to its standards, and involves personal attention.

<u>Not easily defined</u>

CP1 and CP 11 stated that common sense is something one assumes everyone knows to be true as a universal principle. CP9 believes common sense is basic knowledge that people can learn and master easily and pass along to future generations CP3 posited it is something that does not change with time. However, CP11 believes common sense is accumulated gradually over time by use and will potentially affect how one thinks and works.

CP 14 connected common sense to shared values among management. They see it as the philosophy or belief behind why an organization is in operation. CP5 added that commons sense is also a set of unwritten rules and regulations. CP8 related this to being judged by principles we hold in our heart. Common sense, to this participant's way of thinking, comes from parents, personal experience, and culture. It is something we live and are judged by in our practice. They noted common sense is the belief that everybody can change something in this world and create value for our society.

CP5 pointed out that common sense differs from country to country and company to company, so it is likely culturally based. CP11 agreed with that assessment and added age, ethnicity, and gender are

factors in determining what is and is not common sense. CP12 added there is a connection to leadership philosophies and skills, which are cross-cultural and regarded as feasible and correct from different cultural and education backgrounds. CP5 concurred and noted commons sense becomes more difficult to standardize with increased diversity and globalization.

Fluid nature

CP10 notes common sense involves expertise and is like soft capacity; it enables managers to push things ahead in a smooth fashion. CP13 added that common sense means leaders should always try to act and make decisions that support the integrity and values of the organization for which they are working and representing. CP14 says that means fully integrating sustainability into business goals and not just as a means of branding. CP3 believes that common sense shows in unusual times a different approach may be needed than what otherwise might have been called for by the organization. They noted that common sense provides an understanding that with new technologies, concepts, and materials that novel challenges exist on the way people produce, consume, and communicate.

CP15 conveyed that common sense means hiring the right talent can bring more business, control costs, improve margins, and bring health to the business. Furthering that point, CP2 notes that common gives organizations the ability to design and implement a good running mechanism for the organization. Common sense, in their thinking, allows leaders to make firm decisions based on industry trends. Common sense allows organizations to increase respect and pay greater attention to employees rather than just being customer focused.

CP5 sees common sense as a tool that allows a good leader to make efforts to define the company's value and mission and to set up the company's culture, which should then help the organization from running into conflict with generally accepted cultural principles. CP6 agreed and added that common sense involves being sensitive to changing social environments and how they affect one's business decisions and people. They observed that common sense involves a sense of cost saving and the effect such decisions have on the short-term and long-term health of the business.

Personal attention

CP4 saw a link between common sense and emotional intelligence. They noted that it involves understanding personal strengths and weaknesses so you can better manage behaviors and make a positive influence in the workplace. CP6 added common sense recognizes that everyone is valuable in an organization and this is shown by respect and behavior towards employees. CP7 relates common sense to conceptualization, good communication skills, interpersonal skills, innovation thinking, and a team work spirit CP15 added that common sense involves respecting and valuing people who work for you, which connects with Goleman's (1995) concepts on emotional intelligence.

The Chinese business leaders, unlike their American counterparts, regarded best practices in terms of broader categories rather than specific, lived leadership examples (Webber, et al., 2013). In addition, even though their titles (in most cases) would be considered senior management level in a US organization, these participants did not always consider themselves as senior leaders. There were four

prominent areas that participants related as common sense, best practice leadership abilities: harmonious working conditions, personal recognition, cultural understanding, and trend analysis.

<u>Harmonious working conditions</u>

 CP12 and others noted that at the heart of common sense leadership practices is the notion of creating guanxi (harmonious working environments) so others like the company and their job. CP4 adds this means developing a network relationship to connect all activities within the organization. Common sense leadership links resources and actions based on the concept of social exchange among similar minded organizations so one can quickly launch products into the market. CP3 believes common sense leadership begins by helping employees understand that the most important thing to do to survive in their position is to learn and try to understand the business first.

Common sense leadership means, according to CP10, communicating at all levels whether through verbal or non-verbal means. CP8 adds the common sense leader must have the ability to study and accept new ideas. He must have the ability to communicate properly to people. CP5 notes it is sharing principles with employees and then having them rank its importance. The next step would be following the results with the followers own perspectives on the areas discovered. CP15 notes this helps the common sense leader to recognize that everyone can be a high achiever if management acknowledges their followers worth to the organization.

CP13 says common sense leadership means recognizing when and where to compromise in areas of corporate social responsibility. They note that doing the right thing to set the foundations of higher integrity throughout the organization should be a top priority for the common sense leader. Common sense leadership is exemplified by caring for people rather than profit, striving to be strong not big, and creating value by addressing needs is the only way to survive

<u>Personal recognition</u>

Common sense leadership practices place an emphasis on the individual rather than the tasks they do. According to CP1, common sense means showing people how to do a task that goes past the written protocols. CP3 adds common sense leaders need to help employees recognize they need attitude plus ability to succeed and that ability is a car and attitude is the driver. They went on to suggest that attitude is the most important thing to possess because with hard work one can gain experience (and ability) though you do not have it today. However, CPS 3 believes attitude is a more immediate quality to have. CP13 sees common sense practices starting with a commitment to lead by example and applying the "do unto others" principle. Common sense leaders should be involved with the business they are running and demonstrate the same passion, commitment and focus that is expected of your followers. Commons sense practice to them means walking the talk. CP15 holds that common sense leaders praise people for their efforts so they will become better and better to keep modeling what we desire to see them doing.

<u>Cultural understanding</u>

CP5 noted that common sense leadership begins with an awareness of cultural differences so one does not place their organization at risk when something might be common sense in their culture but not be classified that way in the culture of the client. They added that everyone should operate within the same norms to establish a shared set of principles and organizational culture. CP6 believes common sense leadership begins when leaders are willing to listen to contrary opinions in host countries who understand local markets better than those making decisions thousands of miles away.

CP13 relates common sense leadership practices to an awareness and sensitivity to local cultures, customs and politics. Simply stated, CP13 says common sense leadership has at its foundation cultural sensitivity. In some situations, CP12 notes, this means assigning a reasonable number of tasks so employees are not overworked. CP7 suggests common sense leadership means making a communication plan so projects are run effectively when you are dealing with people from different regions of your country who come from different cultural backgrounds.

<u>Trend Analysis</u>

CP2 noted that common sense leadership involves understanding trends so the organization flourishes. CP8 observed common sense practice means developing products that are first class with lower prices to meet market demand. CP13 recognizes the changing global marketplace and connected common sense leadership practice with knowing when to apply pressure to maintain the focus and desired results for the business and when to lighten the mood when stress levels are becoming unhealthy. CP14 posited that to be a strong pillar in his own corporation, and to be on the cutting edge, common sense leadership means inspiring the corporation to raise the bar of sustainable performance (both internally and externally) toward the right direction so success is achieved in a volatile marketplace. CP8 notes that common sense leaders should focus on looking at the big picture and developing plans that will work. They note the common sense leader must have a wide knowledge of customers' needs and an understanding of the products performance. CP12 notes this means being strict when necessary.

COMPARISONS

Although both the U.S. study and the Chinese study agreed that a single definition of a common sense leader is not apparent, the studies did indicate several important differences. According to Hersey et al. (2007), the Contingency Leadership Model focused on two primary areas: (a) the ability to achieve specific goals (tasks) and (b) the development of an effective rapport between followers and the leader (relationships). The most significant difference between the two studies is the focus on tasks versus the focus on relationships. According to Webber et al. (2012), the U.S. study focused on accomplishing tasks. U.S. leaders believed that common sense leadership was indicated when an organization can establish a set of goals that move the organization forward and provide a vision for the members of that organization. In conjunction with goal setting, U.S. leaders also indicated that common sense leadership was a component of morality in the decision making process. Common sense leaders believed that a true moral compass was critical and works in conjunction with the way employees are motivated.

In contrast, Chinese leaders focused more on the relationships between leadership and team members. The two key components of this approach were a fluid approach to managing people. A critical part of a

fluid approach is how leadership communicates information throughout the organization. As found by U.S. leaders, a task oriented organization focuses on delineating a consistent vision about and to the organization. Chinese leaders also indicated the importance of vision. The most significant difference was a concentration on people versus tasks. Working in conjunction with a fluid approach to managing people, Chinese leaders indicated that providing personal attention to members of the organization is an important part of common sense leadership. Related to Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence, common sense leaders indicated that understanding the individual strengths and weaknesses of team members best defines common sense. The closest comparison to the beliefs of U.S. leaders concerns the ability of the leader to creating the right environment. By setting the right environment, the organization will thrive and survive through all potential challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this study was two-fold. First was to understand what Chinese leaders indicated as the key components of common sense leadership. The second purpose was to compare and contrast Chinese leaders with their counterparts in the United States. It is interesting that both studies failed to find a single definition of what common sense leadership means. The most significant difference concerns the approach of the leaders. U.S. leaders were focused on tasks and how the organization accomplishes the goals within the setting of a common vision. Chinese leaders were more focused on the relationship between the leader and team members and the organization and team members.

Chinese leaders found that common sense leadership depended on the fluid nature of how leaders communicate the organizational vision throughout the organization. Chinese leaders also believed that the environment was critical to success. This included a link between providing personal attention to members of the team, creating a harmonious work environment and providing personal recognition of the members of the team. In a Chinese environment, the organization thrives when the individuals within the organization believe they are important and a reason for the organization's success. This is also true of U.S. leaders, but the focus is more on task accomplishment than individual success.

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