

# WISE MANAGEMENT IN ORGANISATIONAL COMPLEXITY

An International Conference at the China Europe International Business School,  
Shanghai: 23-24 May, 2012

*A symposium of keynote speeches, seminars and roundtable discussions  
with three best paper awards of US\$5,000.*

## Keynotes:

- *The Wise Leader*, Prof. Hirotaka Takeuchi, Harvard Business School
- *Wisdom and Management in the Knowledge Economy*, Prof. Bernard McKenna and Prof. David Rooney, University of Queensland Business School

## Conference Advisory Committee and Conference chairmanship:

Prof. David Bevan (EABIS/Grenoble Graduate School of Business);  
Prof. Henri-Claude de Bettignies (INSEAD/CEIBS);  
Prof. Po-Keung Ip (National Central University, Taiwan);  
Prof. Bernard McKenna (University of Queensland Business School);  
Prof. Mike Thompson (CEIBS);  
Prof. Katherine Xin (CEIBS).

*Conference Book:* The Centre for Leadership and Responsibility is launching a book series on Leadership and Responsibility and the first volume will include selected papers from the conference. (Editors: Mike Thompson and David Bevan). The publisher, subject to contract, will be Palgrave Macmillan.

## Conference Host: The Centre for Leadership and Responsibility at the China Europe International Business School

The mission of the Euro-China Centre for Leadership and Responsibility (ECCLAR) at CEIBS is to create and disseminate knowledge on the practice and development of wise and responsible leadership especially in the corporate context. This Conference is designed to further the Centre's mission and also to provide a context for scholars with research and teaching interests in leadership and management education to discuss how wisdom might be cultivated and applied as a vital resource to responsible management and leadership. In 2010, the Centre co-organised with the Academy of Business in Society a conference on *Practical Wisdom for Management from the Chinese Classical Traditions* which stimulated strong interest from Chinese and international scholars. A selection of papers from this conference are available in a special edition of the *Journal of Management Development* (2011, Vol. 30 no.7-8). Mike Thompson, Director, *The Euro-China Centre for Leadership and Responsibility*

## A Call for Papers

The financial crisis of 2008 rekindled Ghoshal's (2005) criticism of business schools for "mismanaging" the leadership education of their MBA students. There has been an ongoing and persistent questioning of the lack of practical ethical training and the responsibilities and accountabilities of the business leaders (Bakan, 2004; Walker, 2009). In civil society, the role of political leaders has been under sharp scrutiny as media poses questions about the wisdom of the political decision-making process. At the World Economic Forum in 2010

and in 2011, many leaders publicly identified themselves with the need for business reformation and renewal: rethinking values, redesigning systems and rebuilding institutions. The management models that have focussed on effectiveness have not been as strong on questions concerning the practice and cultivation of wisdom in managing complex organisations. The demand for 'quick fixes' to complex ethical, social, economic and environmental challenges in a highly competitive environment has given rise to questionable judgments. In the world of management the financial crisis has placed fresh demands on the ethical behaviour of managers and especially those who lead their organisations. Anecdotal evidence from private equity investors indicates that they no longer simply seek talented management but managers who can act with probity and values. The complexity of managing large-scale operations has increased the reality that 'right answers' are not always clear and demands for the 'right decision' vary according to different internal and external power brokers and according to culture. The conference will aim to address these challenges through presentations and fora on wise management in organisational complexity.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the nature and application of wisdom by a range of academics as well as business practitioners and commentators<sup>1</sup>. The Arete Initiative at The University of Chicago, for example, has launched a \$2 million research programme entitled: *Defining Wisdom Project* remarking that "wisdom is currently overlooked as a topic for serious scholarly and scientific investigation in many fields." The Yale and the Academy of Business in Society (EABIS), are co-organising conferences with universities and business schools between 2009 and 2013 to discuss practical wisdom and business from the perspectives of Christianity, the Chinese classical tradition, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam, culminating in a global conference at Yale University in 2013.

In a McKinsey Quarterly survey in 2009 of 2,207 executives, only 28 percent said that the quality of strategic decisions in their companies was generally good, 60 percent thought that bad decisions were about as frequent as good ones, and the remaining 12 percent thought good decisions were altogether infrequent (McKinsey, 2009). These statistics illustrate the dilemmas of managerial decision-making that are heightened in circumstances in which competing claims are made by people and groups with divergent interests, values and beliefs. Competing claims are the stuff of organisational life and, for those responsible for making judgments in the interests of the organisation, effective knowledge management may be compromised by an undue proclivity to self-interest. Organisations utilise a range of rational and socio-cultural processes to resolve competing claims and interests. However, critical management studies have highlighted the nature of managerial power in which powerful actors lead with a dominant ideology akin to their own self-interest leading to difficulties in resolving organisational dilemmas in objective ways. Diefenbach, By and Klarner (2009:414) cite a number of such studies. In the midst of such dilemmas and complex decision-making, what might a focus in wisdom mean for managerial decision-making? As Rooney, McKenna and Liesch (2010:8) have pointed out, wisdom can be seen as a strategic resource to learning, knowledge and strategic leadership because it is "required for complex decision making, applying knowledge, and so that these complex intellectual processes result in ethical actions." In short, good judgment leading to good actions.

As Derrida has argued the meaning of a word cannot be wholly and completely defined, it is constantly postponed in language through a constant deferral of the meaning through a chain of different signifiers. The richness of meaning inherent in the word "wisdom" requires a breadth of philosophical and religious interpretation as well as contemporary research and commentary. Wisdom might therefore be regarded as a synthetic concept and an integrative proposition: "As a synthetic concept, it requires embodiment of insight, hindsight, and foresight. It can be also described as a super-sight rooted in the depth of experience of life and reality. As an integrative proposition it must form a base for issuing various judgments that apply to different situations for problem solution and guides of action." (Cheng, 2005:317).

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Haque, U., 2010, "The Wisdom Manifesto", *Harvard Business Review Blogs*; Senge P. et al, 2007, *Presence*; Covey, S., 2007, *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* and Gigerenzer, 2009, *Gut Feelings: The Intelligence of the Unconscious*.

The target of the conference is management and management education and development but with limited studies on wisdom in the management sciences we hope that the conference will create knowledge that can be applied to the task of developing *wise management in organisational complexity*.

We seek papers which can be research-based or conceptual papers written in English or Mandarin which should address the Conference theme in three broad areas as set out below.

### **1. Contemporary cross-disciplinary conceptualisation on the nature and experience of wisdom and its relevance to management**

- How might contemporary research and discourses from the fields of cognitive and empirical psychology, organisational behavioural studies, leadership studies, business ethics and philosophy be synthesised and applied to management practice?
- Does the literature on authentic leadership with its focus on positive psychological capacities, self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviours help in explaining the nature and experience of wisdom?

### **2. East-West insights for management from the classical wisdom philosophy**

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle are sources of insight on the significance of wisdom to the human condition. Recent studies have brought classical scholarship to life in describing the anatomy of wisdom using the 'classical phrase book' and particularly in distinguishing practical wisdom (*phronesis*) from transcendent wisdom (*sophia*). A range of wisdom discourses and narratives are found in the Hindu Vedas, Buddhism and Chinese philosophy. As Trowbridge (2011:155) points out, in the "Taoist and Confucian tradition, the highest achievement for a human is to be a sage."

- What might we learn and apply to wise management practice from the classical western tradition (philosophical and Christian) which sets out the wise way to achieve that which is "good and expedient for living well" (Aristotle)?
- How might management benefit from the Western classical description and anatomy of wisdom, such as: *sophia*, *phronesis*, *sapientia*, *techné*, *episteme*, *praxis* and *prudentia*?
- What is the distinctive philosophical contribution made by the Chinese philosophical and religious texts? The etymology of *zhi* and the Chinese concept of wisdom indicates that in the mind of the ancient Chinese, wisdom is primarily derived from knowledge or results from the extension of knowledge. (Yao, 2005:304).

### **3. Wisdom in Management Practice and Education**

"Can managers learn to be wise?" Aristotle and Peter Senge, from two different eras, offer an affirmative answer. Managers have financial and strategic models with methodological instruments and analytical tools to support business strategy and decision-making but the tools and models are not always sufficient to the management task. In speaking about the change of direction in Harvard Business School, Dean Nitin Nohria said, "We needed to focus on cultivating judgment not basic analytical tools."<sup>2</sup>

- In the midst of managing organisational complexity how can practical wisdom be realistically practiced by management?
- In the evolution of management education, how does wisdom fit the curricula?
- How does wisdom fit with "fact-based decision-making" and the contemporary rationalist epistemologies, which infuse many management practices?

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<sup>2</sup> Middleton, D. and Light, J., 2011, "Harvard Changes Course", Wall Street Journal, 05/02/2011. Source: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704124504576118674203902898.html>

## Best Paper Awards

The Conference Advisory Committee will adjudicate the three Best Paper Awards. Winners will receive a prize of US\$5,000.

## Paper Submission Guidelines

We seek original papers that address the main theme of the conference and topics from the areas listed above. Originality means that the paper has not been presented at any other conferences or published in any academic journals or books. Accepted papers will be presented at the conference in themed track workshop discussion sessions. Papers may be submitted in Mandarin or English and workshop tracks will be organised based on the language of the submission. There will be no translation available in the workshop sessions. We shall strictly adhere to the timeline set out below for abstract and full paper submissions.

### **Abstract Submission: 30 November 2011**

Abstract submissions of the planned full paper should be of no more than 500 words and submitted for review by the conference advisory committee by email only as an attached Word document (pdf format is not permitted). The abstract should be identified by its title only with no author information shown. Author information should be stated in the body of the email and should include full name and affiliation, contact details and a short biographical note. Your email and attached abstract should be emailed to Joyce Wang, the conference secretary ([wjoyce@ceibs.edu](mailto:wjoyce@ceibs.edu)). The committee will aim to notify authors by 15 December 2011 of acceptance for full paper submission.

### **Full paper Submission: 15 March 2012**

Full paper submissions should not exceed 5,000 words including references. Papers submitted in English should use Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, with 1-inch (2.5cm) margins all around for the text, including headers and footnotes. References should follow APA style guidelines.

The full paper should be emailed as an attachment to the conference secretary ([wjoyce@ceibs.edu](mailto:wjoyce@ceibs.edu)). It should be identified by its title only and shown in the header of each page. No author information should be shown on any page. Author information should be stated in the body of the email and should include full name and affiliation, contact details and a short biographical note. Your email and attached full paper should be emailed to Joyce Wang, the conference secretary ([wjoyce@ceibs.edu](mailto:wjoyce@ceibs.edu)). The committee will aim to notify authors by 15 December 2011 of acceptance for full paper submission.

### **Paper Submission Summary**

**30 November 2011** Abstracts of papers should be emailed to arrive no later than 30 November 2011 and addressed to the Conference Secretary, Joyce Wang ([wjoyce@ceibs.edu](mailto:wjoyce@ceibs.edu)).

**15 December 2011** Notification of acceptance for full paper submission.

**15 March 2012** the full paper (5,000 words maximum) and an outline of your proposed presentation which should be designed to be no longer than 20 minutes. Acceptance for presentation will not be final until the full paper is submitted by and at least one author has registered for the conference.

## Conference Registration and Fees

Conference Fee: RMB 2500 (US\$400) which includes lunch, coffee breaks and dinner on 23 May at the Ramada Plaza Pudong. (An early bird fee of RMB 2000 (US\$320) will be available for bookings made by 31 January, 2012).

Registration and payment forms are available at [www.ceibs.edu/ecclar/WiseManagement](http://www.ceibs.edu/ecclar/WiseManagement)  
The Centre for Leadership and Responsibility can make travel bursaries in special cases – please submit a motivation letter together with your paper / case.

For further information, please contact the Centre for Leadership and Responsibility, CEIBS.  
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