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## **The organisation in balance: Reflection and intuition as complementary processes**

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# The organisation in balance: Reflection and intuition as complementary processes

## Abstract

*There are two complementary processes that are important in steering activities within organisations: reflection and intuition. These two processes, which correspond to different parts of the brain, are analysed in the present article. This includes the introduction of a phase model for reflection. Intuition is examined using concepts borrowed from transpersonal psychology. Within this context, the work of Maslow and Wilber is discussed, notably their theories on the higher stages of human consciousness. Our society places considerable emphasis on rationality and efficiency, which means that reflection often receives more attention than intuition. Both are important, however, and in the end it is a question of integrating the reflective and intuitive processes. A concrete method useful for supporting that process is described in the present article.*

## **Introduction**

Leaders and trainers in organisations who search for new insights that can support their work, do not have an easy time of it. On the one hand, there is a plethora of books and courses stressing the importance of working efficiently and on the basis of logical structures. They emphasise strategic policy, planning and control, competence management, and specific qualifications and indicators for both products and people. At the same time, there has also been a rise in the number of new books and training courses which stress the importance of 'natural processes' which take shape from 'the inside out'. Here the emphasis is on the employee as a person, the organic processes at work within the organisation, the inner qualities of the leader, as well as spirituality, inspiration and flow (see e.g. Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Broadly speaking, we have here two major approaches based on very different assumptions. How do you link these differing approaches, as head of an organisation, trainer, or organisational adviser?

This question lies at the core of the present article. On the basis of two core concepts, *reflection* and *intuition*, we will see that in the end it is a question of integrating two basic human qualities. The discussion will centre on the fact that we are dealing here with two process concepts, and that learning to manage the relevant processes within organisations means learning to integrate them within individuals. Because that integration should start with at the management level, many of the examples in this article pertain to the functioning of leaders.

## **Change as a core theme**

In today's society it has gradually become impossible to prepare people for the work they will be doing by means of preparatory courses. Developments are now proceeding at such a pace that what you learn today may be obsolete tomorrow. This explains the popularity of *on-the-job training* and *just-in-time learning*. The question organisations are now increasingly asking themselves is 'How can we see to it that people are willing and able to adjust to constantly changing circumstances?' It is vital that employees learn how to steer their own development, so that they learn from each new experience, and become

ever more proficient in independently incorporating new insights into their day-to-day activities. This idea is crucial to the principle of the learning organisation. But this theory, fruitful though it is, is not sufficient. What is important is *how* employees in organisations learn from their work experiences, and *how* they learn to direct their own development, even in the midst of complex processes of change.

There are many theories on how this can be done, which are rooted in cognitive and social psychology and educational theory. More therapeutic approaches also provide valuable insights: therapy is, after all, about processes of change. The present article focuses on the question of how at least some of these sources can be applied to a concrete organisation and a specific context.

## **Reflection**

Generally acknowledged is the constructivist principle that people learn primarily by actively structuring their own experiences through the personal attribution of meaning. That structuring can take place in a more or less conscious way: people are capable of learning how to consciously and systematically reflect on their work experiences. This involves a process which constantly alternates between work and learning from that work, and which culminates in learning during work. The model in figure 1 is helpful in promoting awareness of a systematic process of reflection (Korthagen et al., 2001). It is called the ALACT model of reflection (after the first letters of the five phases), whereby phase 5 is the first phase of a new cycle.

[Insert figure 1]

Because in the phases 2 through 4 the individual has gradually become aware of something new, ultimately leading to behavioural alternatives, in the end something has been learned. In this way, the new cycle represents a qualitative improvement over the previous one. This is why we call this a cyclical model for reflection. Readers who see in this model aspects of the better-known model developed by Kolb (Kolb & Fry, 1975) are quite right. That cyclical model consists of four phases, namely concrete experience, observation/reflection, abstract conceptualisation/generalisation, and

testing/experimentation. Despite its considerable popularity, Kolb's model has one main disadvantage (see also De Jong, Korthagen & Wubbels, 1998): its orientation is highly rational. Admittedly, rationality is a core concept when it comes to professional practice (Kinchleoe, 1990), but in actual fact the day-to-day work within organisations is guided not so much by abstract concepts as by concrete plans, worries, needs, and images. This is why the cyclical model in figure 1 devotes considerable attention to the influence that these more intrapersonal mechanisms have on reflection. More abstract concepts governing the way an organisation functions, are usually formed during a later stage and during a longer period of time.

There is no doubt that everyone more or less automatically reflects, if only in the car or train on their way home from work. However, the question is to what extent that reflection is effective. Research shows that when they reflect, people do not always devote the same attention to each phase of the model (Korthagen et al., 2001, p. 112-113). Some may linger in the phase where they look back to a certain event, without getting to the core of the problem; others are inclined to go straight to the core, but without first examining the available information. Moreover, in a negative situation there is often a tendency to move on to phase 4 and to look for solutions, without first analysing the problem. People also differ in the degree to which they are aware of the way their feelings influence their actions.

It is noteworthy that successful employees appear to have an ability to learn from previous experiences. Often they appear to automatically reflect in a systematic manner that resembles that in the model in figure 1. The careful completion of the various phases has become a kind of second nature to them. This, in essence, is the significance of the cyclical model: it provides a framework by which people can learn to reflect more systematically. In this respect, both people and teams can develop the skill of self-steering. Initially supervision will focus on helping the employee to work through all the steps systematically; ultimately, however, the goal is to learn to reflect independently and to 'monitor' one's own reflection. The next step may be for the employee to coach others in systematic reflection upon work experience. This results in a *reflective organisation*, an organisation in which a human potential is developed that is based on expertise pertaining to the development of expertise.

Because learning to reflect is not a purely cognitive process, a coach who supervises the process of

learning to reflect will have to be trained in creating a sense of security, assessing the appropriateness of certain measures for the individual in question, dealing with learning resistances, et cetera.

## **Two functions of the brain**

As we have seen, when we reflect on decisions taken, we often discover that much of what we do is not in fact guided by the systematic and rational processing of information. Indeed, managers regularly make decisions that do not appear to be logical, or which they find very difficult to explain. For example, in the final round of an application procedure two candidates are left. A appears to be slightly better qualified than B, but there is 'something' that tells the manager that B would fit into the organisation better. Managers often find it quite difficult to deal with such apparent contradictions in themselves, especially if they are convinced that the best guideline is rational and logical thinking. There are, however, other processes which direct our actions, and which are often equally effective. Various authors from such widely ranging fields as neurophysiology, social psychology, cognitive psychology, education, and philosophy have made a distinction between a logical-analytical manner of information processing by human beings and an entirely different manner, for which a variety of terms have been proposed. Ornstein (1972) uses *analytical* and *holistic* to refer to this phenomenon, pointing to a dichotomy between *rational* and *non-rational*. Levy-Agresti and Sperry (1968) make use of the terms *analytical* and *Gestalt*. Polanyi (1961) distinguishes between the use of *explicit knowledge* and *tacit* knowledge, while Milner (quoted in Bogen, 1973) prefers the terms *verbal* and *perceptual*. Bogen points out that these distinctions are also to be found in oriental psychologies. He quotes Akhilananda who, writing on Hindu psychology, makes use of terms which may be translated as *rational thinking* and *integrated thinking*. Although admittedly not the same, all these dichotomies appear to refer to two distinct functions of the human brain. It is generally accepted that there is a kind of dichotomy in the functions of the brain, although there is more to it than a simple division into right half and left half (Bryden, 1982). In the present article, the common core of all the various dichotomies will be referred to as the contrast between *reflection* and *intuition*. The first term has been clarified above. The second term will require

some further clarification.

## **Intuition**

In the case of intuition, it is a question of seeing through things, getting down to what is implicit, uncovering the layer that lies beneath the surface, the things that cannot be expressed directly, in linear language. There are many anecdotes about top managers who 'knew' exactly what had to be done in a critical situation, even though they had not sat down and reasoned it out (see, for example, Agor, 1989). Simon (1989) describes how managers themselves are aware that many of their best decisions were taken intuitively. It is interesting that in retrospect they are often good at coming up with a 'logical' version of the decision.

At the same time, intuition can also play a role in routine situations. The experienced leader knows intuitively when it is wise to exert pressure on a particular employee and when it is not, and makes use of the often subtle interaction between individuals. And yet this ability does not manifest itself only in interpersonal situations. For example, there are managers who seem to have a kind of 'deeper understanding' of the subject matter, and are capable of looking at a detailed report full of figures and intuitively homing in on its weak points.

Ford (1977, cited in Agor, 1989), who has studied intuition among managers, found that the phenomenon is closely related to a willingness to take risks. This is perhaps not surprising in the light of the fact that when an individual's thinking is less logical-analytical, he or she also relinquishes a degree of control. This means that he or she is obliged to trust to certain things that cannot be easily explained, things just seem to 'bubble up'. It is striking that in organisations where the management displays such trust, it is more likely to be found among the employees. Trust creates trust: in organisations where those in executive positions attach great importance to control, we see the reverse of the above situation. The urge to control events is passed on down the ladder, and this is fatal to intuition. Associates in such organisations often describe the consequences as a kind of emptiness, a lack of inspiration. It is not difficult to predict what happens when management, in turn, attempts to exercise control over the processes of inspiration and innovation.

## One-sidedness

Why is it, then, that logical-analytical thinking often occupies such a central position? While most managers tend to feel comfortable with a concept such as systematic reflection, the concept of intuition may make them distinctly uncomfortable.

The most important reason is perhaps because intuitive processes are not easy to define or to understand, which makes them hard to control and to talk about. We need only look at the way the authors mentioned above wrestled with the problem of how to designate the phenomenon. In day-to-day work situations, control and direct communication in simple language are important: then we at least know what we're talking about! Or is it possible that we only think we know what we're talking about? Are we perhaps only reassuring ourselves with notions of control, linearity and causality?

The second explanation is a philosophical one, which goes back to the influence of Plato on Western culture. Plato's thinking was based on the existence of the 'Good', and he believed that it is possible to understand this concept by means of intellectual analysis (Russell, 1974, p. 133). He used this point of departure to 'prove' that his ideal republic was 'good'. One of the proofs Plato used was a sequence of logical causal relations. The influence of Plato on our worldview is considerable, even today. It is evident in our scientific traditions, and in the way we look at 'good leadership'. A comparison with another, less influential Greek philosopher, Thrasymachus, may be enlightening. For Thrasymachus, it was not a question of arguments and counter-arguments. As Russell (1974, p. 134) notes, the only relevant question for Thrasymachus was whether you *like* the kind of Republic Plato envisions. If we replace 'the ideal republic' in this example by 'the ideal organisation', then we see that the vision of Thrasymachus is much closer to the feeling and intuition of managers than to objective analysis. In 1998 the well-known American educationalist Elliot Eisner gave a lecture at the American Educational Research Association in which he presented a similar vision of management. For years he has propagated the concept of *connaissanceurship*, which is based on an *aesthetic mode of knowing*, as is customary in the world of art. This principle, also known as the 'gut feeling' of the expert, is actually used implicitly by all managers. Not all of them, however, will be conscious of the fact that it is a quality that can be developed and steered in



a particular direction.

A third reason for the under-valuation of intuition in organisations is a psychological one, which is likewise rooted in our culture. The less rational side of our psyche is often seen as 'evil'. It is associated with our instincts and our passions, and with the notion that they must be conquered or subdued. Everything that is 'Freudian' is considered suspect.

### **Kinds of intuition**

A theoretical analysis of the concept of intuition may help to refute the objections outlined above. We will begin by examining the various forms which intuition can take.

In the first place, what we sometimes refer to as intuition is often no more than the accelerated completion of a logical analysis (Goldberg, 1983). It would be more appropriate to speak of a *Gestalt* which guides our actions (Korthagen, 1993; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). And yet there is a big difference between a chess computer which is capable of rapidly calculating a large number of variants and a Grand Master who, in a matter of seconds, can picture the essential patterns of a position and 'knows' where the threats loom and where the possibilities lie. Although the Grand Master makes use of *Gestalts* based on years of experience, he is also capable of coming up with a brilliant but highly unorthodox move, one which the computer could never calculate, no matter how much time it was given. The creative aspect of intuition is clearly quite different from a super-fast logical analysis. The crucial difference is that any kind of logical-analytical thought process makes use of existing concepts, which means that it is by definition 'outdated' For it to be new, something else is needed. Often it is a question of being able to work with internal *images* rather than linear language, for as Jung (1998, p. 221) says: "The primary function of intuition (.....) is simply to transmit images, or perceptions of relations between things (...). These images have the value of specific insights which have a decisive influence on action whenever intuition is given priority." Jung distinguishes different types of individuals, including the 'intuitive type'. His vision has been further elaborated by others in the form of a questionnaire, which measures the extent to which an individual is intuitive (Briggs-Myers and McCaulley, 1985).

If we focus on examples which actually involve intuition, and in which logical-analytical thinking plays almost no role at all, another important distinction must be made. There is a considerable difference between sudden, intuitive 'flashes', brief moments of deeper insight, and a more stable capacity to act on the basis of a deeper knowing, a realisation of the larger whole of which the decision in question is only one part. The first seems to overcome us, the second is a skill that we have acquired and that we can consciously call on. Is it possible to develop this more stable form of intuition? The answer is yes, but it will take more than certain short courses in 'spirituality for managers' would have us believe. In these courses situations are often created that briefly put the participants in touch with their intuitive skills, skills which are in principle present in all of us, but which they are later incapable of calling up independently. To clarify the difference, we will look at the work of Maslow and Wilber.

### **Peak and plateau experiences**

Abraham Maslow, who is generally seen as the founder of humanistic psychology, has enriched our culture with deep insights into human existence. Before Maslow made his appearance, psychologists occupied themselves almost exclusively with the 'psychologically sick'. The definition of 'psychologically healthy' was literally 'not sick' (Walsh and Shapiro, 1983). Maslow was the first to study individuals who were psychologically quite healthy, and whom he referred to as *self-actualisers*: people who know how to make the most of their talents and abilities, so that "they are who they are". They feel safe and filled with love, both respected and filled with respect for others (Maslow, 1970, p. 149-180). Maslow discovered that many of these self-actuators had something special in common: the phenomenon that they experienced flashes of contact with a greater whole, flashes that were accompanied by feelings of wholeness, love, and the realisation that they were part of the larger whole and at the same time that they coincided with it. He called this the peak experience. One could say that the 'peak experience' is the prototype of the intuitive experience.

Cleary and Shapiro (1995) published an article with the intriguing title: "The plateau experience and the post mortem life: Abraham M. Maslow's unfinished theory." They describe how in the months before his death Maslow was reconsidering his theory. At one of the few gatherings he took part in during this

period, the Council Grove Conference, he said that he and other ageing people he had spoken to appeared to have fewer peak experiences (Krippner, 1972, p. 113). He discovered that they had, however, received something which compensated for this loss: the ability to experience that same sense of being joined to a greater whole, but in a more stable, less intense manner. He called this the 'plateau experience'. Seen in relation to the metaphor of the peak experience, this calls up an interesting image: you cannot remain standing on a peak for long, as is possible on a plateau. Six months before his death, on December 12, 1969, Maslow wrote in his diary, in telegram style: "Plateau experiences include a quiet, nonorgastic sense of miracle, quiet sacralizing, quiet wonder, gratitude, awe, incredulity, fascination = the quiet peak experiences, more cognitive than emotional" (Lowry, 1982).

Maslow was not able to work out his thoughts on this - and a number of other matters - in the form of a theory. But in 1969 he did publish an article in the newly founded *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, in which he indicated that a number of the self-actualisers reach the phase of the *transcenders* (Maslow, 1969). This means that "the self has enlarged to include aspects of the world and that therefore the distinction between self and not-self (outside, other) has been transcended." He stressed that in this connection we should be thinking not only of people whose profession is characterised by a spiritual element (clergymen, poets and other artists), but that in his experience there were just as many transcenders to be found among businessmen, industrialists, managers, educationalists and politicians. Maslow came in for considerable criticism from established science on account of the unscientific nature of his work. Others later pointed out that Maslow's views were keyed to the individual, and that he devoted much less attention to the social environment within which a person develops (Jansen and Wildemeersch, 1998). Maslow himself was the first to admit that a great deal of research was still needed to support and supplement his observations (for that is what they were, not fabrications): "I have found that it helps to remove scientific uneasiness about my free-wheeling explorations, affirmations, and hypotheses if I am willing to call them prescientific rather than scientific (a word which for so many means verification rather than discovery)" (Maslow, 1969). In his diary Maslow himself also says that he realises that there is a great deal of important work to be done, but that he will probably not be able to complete it. He expressed the hope that others would follow who would continue his work. One of them is Ken

Wilber.

### **Transpersonal psychology**

Wilber was one of the first researchers to combine data from research into the development of children and adults, which led to the discovery that healthy development is characterised by a step-by-step increase in consciousness related to a development in awareness of the borderline between the 'I' and 'not-I', as we will explain below.

The defining of boundaries is fundamental for the survival of the individual (Polster and Polster, 1973). One important type of boundary is that between what we experience as 'I' and what in our experience lies outside the 'I'. For example, someone may attempt to keep his need for contact with others outside his consciousness ('repression'), so that he comes to identify himself with his autonomy ('I can do it alone'). One characteristic of this phenomenon is the fact that the person's repressed need is often projected outwards, so that the person is irritated by people who are in intensive contact with one another. Inside an organisation such individuals may stand in the way of co-operative processes.

A manager who has a strong tendency to draw a line between the I and not-I is often insufficiently aware of the synergy within the organisation. Learning to accept unconscious patterns as part of who you are shifts the dividing line between I and not-I: the unconscious, too, is recognised as part of who one is.

A fundamental boundary that we encounter in our development is that between mind and body: here the question is whether you feel that your body is also 'I'. That is not as simple as it sounds. When we feel the first signs of RSI, our first reaction is often one of annoyance, because our body is preventing us from quickly finishing an important job, almost as if the body is doing battle with the psyche instead of being one with it. As a result, the pain is often not even felt. Under guidance, the sensation of pain may return, which initially gives people the feeling that they are sicker than before the supervision. Each transition from one developmental stage to another is accompanied by a feeling of crisis: such a transition forces the individual to let go of the image that he or she previously had of who and what one is.

Many psychological approaches based on the unity of body and soul (for example, Gestalt therapy) stop

at the following boundary, namely that which surrounds the individual. Everything inside the border formed by the skin is seen as I, everything outside that border is not-I. During peak experiences, however, the individual is given a glimpse of what lies beyond that border: for an instant you realise that there is no distinction between what you used to call I and the outside world, and this which makes it a highly intense experience. It may briefly evoke a sensation of fear, comparable to that experienced by someone who in an earlier stage of development wants to withdraw behind a boundary, for example, when he begins to confront his own fear of personal contact. The first urge is usually to get away. This is why people may try to banish peak experiences from their consciousness, becoming annoyed with people who are interested in what is then referred to as 'spirituality'.

Many people are engaged in a shift of their I-boundaries beyond their own personality. These *transcenders* are often labelled 'crazy' or 'woolly' by those around them. It is unfortunate that the New Age movement has only served to reinforce this negative image. There are many examples of cases where its proponents attempt to push back frontiers between the I and not-I without first going through the development of consciousness related to the earlier stages. This does indeed result in a degree of 'woolliness'. Wilber (1977, 1979) has shown that healthy psychological development consists in a more gradual development of consciousness, in which the ego frontier is pushed back one step at a time. When the highest stages of what is commonly seen as 'normal' psychological development have been attained, the way is open for so-called *transpersonal* development. Here I-awareness is extended beyond the personality which one has previously experienced; the individual is conscious of a kind of oneness with a larger reality (Tart, 1983). This refers to "the experience of being part of meaningful wholes and in harmony with superindividual units such as family, social group, culture and cosmic order" (Boucouvalas, 1988). The term coined to refer to this phenomenon is *interconnectedness*. The individual is conscious of the connection or bond between himself and other people, and sees a deeper, more fundamental structuring of reality. What first appeared to be a dilemma – for example, on the one hand, concern for the well-being of the people within an organisation and on the other hand the requirements which the product must meet – is suddenly no longer a dilemma. In a flash, one is aware of a connectedness in what at first appeared to be an irreconcilable opposition. In many cases the person

experiences an intense moment of illumination in which he suddenly understands the true significance of the adversity and reversals which he has encountered during his life.

This is accompanied by an awareness of a totally different structuring of reality than the one previously seen (and accepted as the only one). This is reminiscent of the distinction between the *implicate* and *explicate* order made by the quantum physicist David Bohm (1980). The *explicate* order stands for the ordering of reality which we observe when we look no further than the exterior of the world around us. This is what science refers to as objective observation. The *implicate order* is the deeper ordering that you observe when you are able to see the oneness of all things. The term 'spiritual' can then be employed more judiciously, having been divested of such connotations as woolly and unscientific. In fact, when one is capable of seeing the deeper structure of reality, it may become clear that one's rational thinking actually consisted in 'making up stories about reality', a phenomenon that has been confirmed by recent neurophysiological research. This research shows that we often devise rational arguments for our behaviour *after* that behaviour took place (see, for example, Damasio, 1999). As Betty Edwards says (quoted in Schwartz, 1995):

"The ideal role of the right hemisphere is to provide access to the deepest levels of one's true experience and to serve as a reality check against the left hemisphere's tendency to make up stories when it doesn't really know the answers."

Considerable scientific research will be needed to further develop the field of transpersonal psychology. That research could, however, make an important contribution to our existence. What Maslow calls the plateau experience can then be seen as a healthy stage in ongoing human development.

### **Integration of intuition and reflection**

We are now able to see intuition as a process that takes place within a human being when the I-boundary is (temporarily) extended beyond the personality, and the person is able to see further than his or her own ego-restricted thinking. The individual is briefly in contact with a greater whole and is able to

observe the *implicate* order in things. This is the true significance of intuition for people in organisations: intuition can help to overcome the illusions of one's own ego: you can discover which of your ideas and actions are in sync with the larger whole. This is a humbling experience. At the same time, however, you may also become aware of the special task that you – as an individual - have within that greater whole which is the organisation. A formerly vague sense of 'calling' may become clearer, and a fresh light may be shed on the fundamental choices with which you are faced in work. When the struggles that usually accompany such choices have been surmounted, this is often accompanied by a sense of being inspired: one is more involved in the work that has to be done - but now with one's heart.

Among busy managers the development sketched above often stagnates. They may have a vague intuitive sense of what it is they want to devote themselves to, but often they do not pay enough attention to that inner voice. This is due in part to the influence of their environment, which often does not take such intuitions seriously, and in any case does nothing to bring them to the surface. It is not until a personal crisis develops (through overwork, perhaps, or a sense of the futility of it all) that people feel compelled to make choices. The unfortunate thing is that if one is not fully aware of the need to further develop one's level of consciousness, such choices may be taken without sufficient thought. For example, the individual may make a radical decision to change jobs, only to discover after a while that the problem has not disappeared.

In working out the insights that have been gained through intuition, reflection again plays an important role. This does not mean that we discard logical-analytic thinking. On the contrary, above we have turned our attention to reflection precisely because it is a core concept in the optimal functioning of people and of organisations. What is important here, however, is finding a better balance between the process of reflection and the process of intuition. In effect, they refer to qualities that complement one another. Ornstein (1972, p. 84) uses a metaphor that may help us to understand the complementary role of reflection and intuition. Here he is discussing the process of designing and building a house:

"At first, there may be a sudden inspiration of the gestalt of the finished house, but this image must be brought to completion, slowly, by linear methods, by plans and contracts, and then by the actual

construction, sequentially, piece by piece."

It works the same way in organisations: an employee can use intuition to discover the essence of a particular issue, and then use his or her ability to reflect to develop the logical steps which give shape to that intuition. It is not only about being on a spiritual level where you experience the deeper structure of things, but also – and perhaps primarily – about giving shape to what you know intuitively should happen. In other words, going from inspiration to creation. Maslow (1969) stresses these two concepts in his article on the *transcenders*. He says it is as if *transcenders* are able to live in two worlds at the same time. In Bohm's terms: they can function simultaneously within the *implicate* and the *explicate* orders.

### **The development of reflective and intuitive competencies in organisations**

When reflection and intuition are keyed to one another, this creates a balance within the individual and the organisation. The development of reflective and intuitive competencies in relation to one another does, however, require a focused investment in the development of expertise. We are not referring to expertise in a specific field with a specific content, which may be obsolete a few years from now, but rather an investment which takes place on a meta-level, namely in the capacity for self-steering by means of reflection and intuition. To clarify the above, we will now briefly describe a professional development course in which both reflective and intuitive qualities are developed.

This course usually starts by focusing on learning to reflect systematically, using the practical instrument provided by the spiral model shown in figure 1. Reflection is not only an individual matter; it also functions within the context of coaching. This means that the participants learn to supervise others as they work through the cycle of reflection. This has added advantages, since not only do they learn to reflect autonomously (for example, by keeping a 'logbook' in which they systematically reflect on relevant work experiences), they also learn how to coach others.

In this way the course contributes to the development of an organisational culture in which team members support one another as they systematically learn from their experiences.



The participants in such courses also experience the difference between solving a problem (phase 4 of the reflection model) by means of simple solutions on the behavioural level, and solutions that are more deeply rooted in oneself or in a realisation of the relationship between aspects inside and outside the organisation. In the latter case, a deepening of reflection will be needed, whereby the concept of intuition quite naturally comes to the fore. During this step it appears to be helpful to make use of the model in figure 2. It is based in part on the Diamond Approach of Almaas (1986, 1988) and on techniques borrowed from Gestalt therapy, NLP and psychosynthesis and translated for everyday use.

[Insert figure 2]

The strategy used there is summarised below. Initially the trainer supervises the process, but the express intention is to help the participants to become autonomous in working through the various phases of what we call 'core reflection'.

First, on the basis of an actual problem, cognitive and emotional contact is made with a personal need or ideal situation (component a of phase 2), and also with the manner in which an individual restricts himself in order to realise that goal (b). The following is an actual example. A middle manager felt the need to learn more about the work being done in other departments. The intended ideal situation was a form of regular exchange between departments. In phase 2 he became aware of his limiting conviction that other departments were already busy enough and wouldn't be receptive to the idea. He also became aware that he was displaying limiting behaviour by not continuing to inquire about new developments in the other departments (the result of a – limiting – sense of embarrassment). When the individual becomes aware of such an inner field of tension between the ideal situation and these limitations (not only insight plays a role, but above all emotional contact with that field of tension), he or she can take a step backwards (we call this *disidentification*). Then a question like 'what is necessary to resolve that field of tension?' can produce surprising new insights. These insights are not imposed, they come from inside, because the person is again in touch with often long-neglected *core qualities* (Ofman, 2000; Almaas, 1986, calls them aspects of the personal

essence). Examples of core qualities triggered in the middle manager in the example were curiosity, self-confidence, courage, frankness, decisiveness and creativity (phase 3). Individuals who call upon such core qualities feel inspired because they have established a relationship with the inspiration they bring to their work, and/or an awareness of the interconnectedness of things. Thus the manager in question gained a greater realisation of the fact that this was actually more than a personal need. There was a need within the organisation as a whole for more synergism, a need that up until then had not been sufficiently recognised.

Another example of this growing sense of interconnectedness (in this case, the interconnectedness of nature), involves a manager who via phase 1 (dissatisfaction with his work) through phase 3 became aware of the necessity to bring about a more environmentally friendly production process, and came to the realisation that this is an important criterion in the production of goods. At the same time, he was able to get in touch with core qualities such as care, interconnectedness, determination and clarity.

Calling on this deeper awareness in phase 3, and the contact with core qualities, the person knows intuitively what to do: he has an inner knowledge' of the step that he wants to take. The person develops *vision*. During the process of 'core reflection' (figure 2) the *relationship between reflection and intuition* takes shape. The final phase is transforming intuitive insights into real action, through the actualisation of the core qualities in concrete situations (phase 4). Here too there is ample opportunity to make use of logical-analytical thinking.

The examples given here point up the following important principle: if a person can act on the basis of a relationship between reflection and intuition, he may also find that what originally (in the phases 1 and 2) appeared to be an individual struggle was in fact a form of contact with a process taking place on a broader level within the organisation (or even the world). In this way personal interests become keyed to what is needed within a larger whole (for example, the entire organisation). In other words, during the process of core reflection someone accepts responsibility for his or her own negative feelings (such as anger or disappointment), and transforms them – through contact with his or her core qualities – into a development which is fruitful for the organisation as a whole. This is a self-

reinforcing process: once deeper contact has been made with core qualities such as frankness, decisiveness and curiosity, the process of core reflection in later situations will proceed more smoothly.

In a training course where this type of experience has become 'normal', an old dream of Maslow's can become reality: he believed that it should be possible 'to hold classes in miraculousness' (Krippner, 1972, p. 114). In particular we can think of the 'miraculous' experiences which participants in such courses have had when they feel inspired by their work. Increasingly they find that they know intuitively how they want to act in concrete situations that they previously saw as problematic. This results not only in more effectiveness within organisations, but also more job satisfaction.

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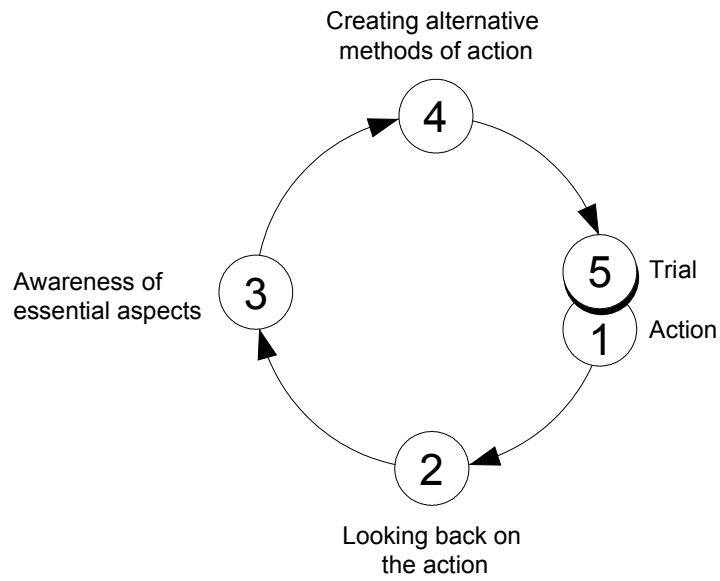


Figure 1: The ALACT model describing the ideal process of reflection.

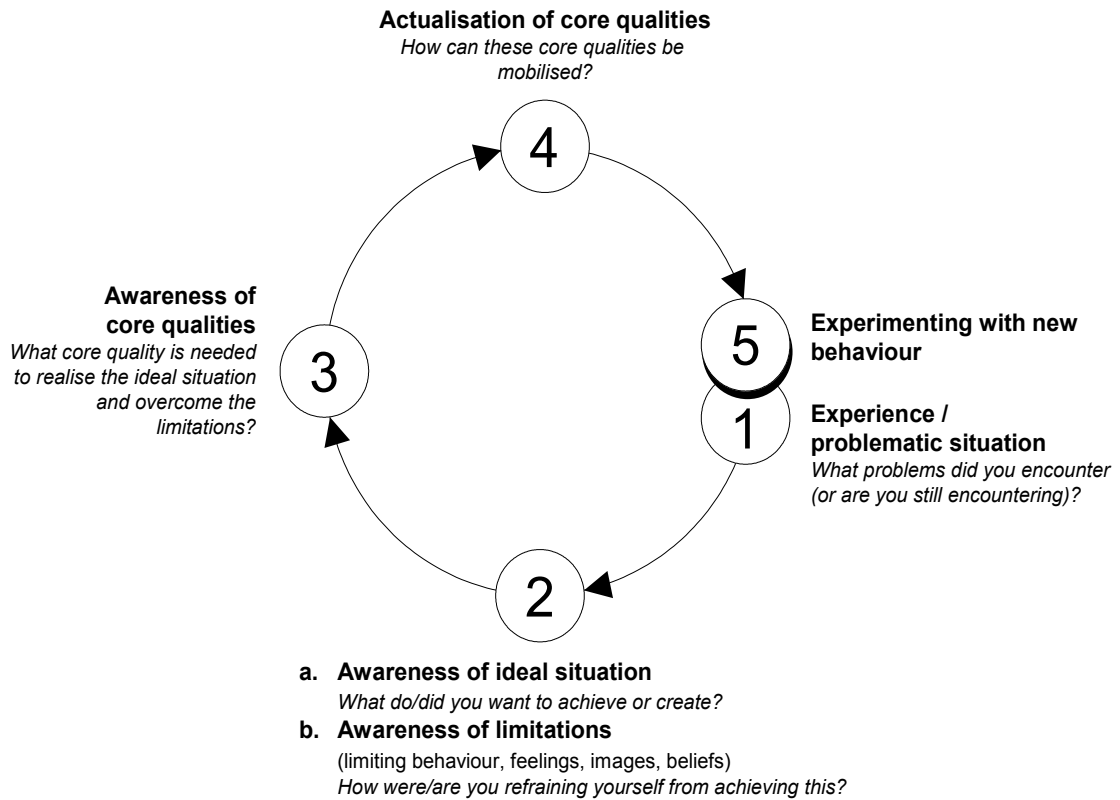


Figure 2: The model of core reflection