DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL AWARENESS IN CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP: NEW APPROACH BASED ON THE INTEGRATION OF WESTERN ETHICAL THEORY AND PRACTICAL EASTERN TEACHINGS

Marek Vich

Abstract

There is a growing demand for moral qualities in contemporary leadership. Many leadership approaches such astransformational, servant, authentic or ethical leadership stress morality as their fundamental core. And so the question of how to practically develop moral leaders arises. This paper will introduce the Moral Awareness Leadership Program (MALP), the leadership training which is designed to support the development of moral leaders through expansion of moral awareness. Moral awareness can be developed by complementary practices of integrity self-evaluation and mindfulness. Integrity self-evaluation is designed to help participants to recognize the level of compatibility between their behavioural, verbal and mental actions, and the compatibility of these actions with the environment. Mindfulness is suitable practice for more conscious work with intuitive and heuristic determinants of moral choice. Mindfulness helps to include those subtle mental factors into integrity self-evaluation and to create more mental space for reasoning. MALP is designed to complement academic and corporate educational programs, which aim to answer the growing demand for moral and mindful leaders in our business environment.

Key words: Moral awareness, Mindfulness, Integrity, Moral leadership, Mindful leadership

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Introduction

Moral leadership is a growing field as more and more leadership theories state morality as their essential part (Dinh et al., 2014). Each of these approaches also provides a different perspective upon whatit means to be a moral leader. Transformational Leadership is focused on leader's ability to identify the needs of the company (Dierendonck et al., 2014), and

distributing these needs to the followers through vision and idealized influence (Bass &Steildmeier, 1999).

Servant leadership isfocused solely on following the needs of others (mostly of the leader's followers) (Liden et al., 2008; Dierendonck et al., 2014), when a leader needs to understand the perspective of others and base action on it. Being aware of one's self, values and principles, and being able to maintain them through everyday are the basic qualities of authentic leadership (Avolio& Gardner, 2005). Trustworthiness and honesty are central qualities to the ethical leadership, although ethical leadership sees these qualities more likevirtues and more in relation to others than in relation to the leader himself/herself (like in authentic leadership) (Brown, Treviño& Harrison, 2005).Each of thementioned theories seems to focus on different aspects of moral leadership because they describe different moral qualities or identities of the leader. According to Sun (2013) some leaders able to employ all of the aforementioned leadership aspects with appropriate moral qualities.

All mentioned leadership approaches state inspiration and example from more advanced individuals as a cornerstone of leadership learning. But a question arises around how to make the development of moral leaders possible without appropriate role models? This paper seeks to provide an answer to this question by introducing the Moral Awareness Leadership Program (MALP). Moral awareness is the ability of being aware of the moral aspect of one's behavioural, verbal and mental actions in allsituations.Moral awareness is based on the wider platform of the integrity self-evaluation practice and mindfulness training, which makes integrity self-evaluation feasible in every situation. MALP is therefore also related to mindful leadership, although it is more focused on the moral aspect of the leader. Generally is MALP complementary to contemporary leadership approaches related to development of moral and mindfulness qualities of the leaders.

The first chapter is focused on theoretical foundations of MALP, the second chapter presents practical methods for development of moral awareness. Thethird chapter will focuson the educational structure.The fourth chapter discusses contributions, applications and future directions of MALP research.

1   Theoretical foundations of MALP

MALP is theoretically founded in various fields of contemporary leadership theories, western and eastern ethics, moral psychology and teachings of mindfulness.

1.1   Moral leadership & integrity

Integrity is closely related to the fulfilment of moral aspects and is an aim of all mentioned leadership approaches. The transformational leader follows the needs of a greater unit (usually the company) (Dierendonck et al., 2014). His/her success is therefore primarily the question of integrity between the leader and the greater unit he is part of (Bass &Steildmeier, 1999). Integrity between leader and his/her followers is essential for the servant leader, because the main role of the servant leader is to serve others (Liden et al., 2008; Dierendonck et al., 2014).Being true to oneself in the case of authentic leader implies the necessity of more internal integrity in orderfor the role of the authentic leader to be fulfilled (Avolio& Gardner, 2005). Trueness and honesty is also central to ethical leadership (Brown, Treviño& Harrison, 2005), although itis more in relation to othersthan to the leader themselves. Therefore all of these approaches contain different aspects of integrity, with transformational, servant and ethical leadership focusing more onexternal integrity and authentic leadership focusing more internal integrity.

Integrity seems to play an important role in self-evaluation of leader's moral credit. MALP therefore contains the practice of integrity self-evaluation as a primary tool for moral discernment. Inorder to make integrity self-evaluationmore understandable, MALP uses the model of two level-integrity, which divides integrity into external and internal. External and internal integrity represent different, but complementary points of view, from which can a leaderself-evaluate the level of his actual integrity. In both integrities, one always evaluates the level of compatibility of hisbehavioural, verbal and mental actions. External integrity self-evaluation is focused on the level of compatibility of one's behavioural, verbal and mental actions with the environment. Internal integrity self-evaluation is focused on the level of the inner compatibility between one behavioural, mental and verbal actions.

1.2   Interconnectedness of actions and psychical conditions

The distinction of external and internal integrity also works as a basic tool for understanding the interconnectedness between one's actions and psychical conditions, which is the fundamental part of Buddhist ethics (Frýba, 1995; Olendzki, 2014). Actionscontrary to the well-being of the whole (unwholesome actions)further contribute to the common suffering

and also give cause to rise of unwholesome mental factors in one's psyche (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). An individual can feel guilt or shame (unwholesome mental factors, which make him suffer) after he hascommitted actionswhichhave contributed to the suffering of others (unwholesome actions) (Frýba, 1995). The similar system exists in the case of wholesome actions. Wholesome actions are the actionswhich contribute to one's well-being as well as others. As Wallace & Shapiro state: *"People do not exist independently from others, so their well-being cannot arise independently of others either (p. 694)."*

1.3   Limits of moral decision making

Even if an individual has sufficient motivation for the development of both integrities theirachievement is not guaranteed. There is the strong evidence which suggests that moral decision-making is significantly driven by intuitive and heuristic mechanisms (Haidt, 2001). According to these findingsmost of our moral choices are made subconsciously without present awareness of a particular individual. Moral reasoning is therefore limited because there are much more determinants of moral choice than human reasoning. Integrity self-evaluation therefore cannot be successful without extension of one's awareness to the subtle psychological processes, which apparently play an important role in one's moral choice.

1.4   Integrating role of mindfulness

The role of mindfulness is to help participants to developa better awareness in order to be able to more clearly self-evaluate their integrity in every situation. Mindfulness is originally a Buddhist practice and enjoys a lot of recognition today among the western scholars. The most popular secular training today is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction therapy (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), which has partially influenced mindfulness training in MALP. Kabat-Zinn (2003) defines mindfulness as *"awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment (p. 145)."*. Generally speaking, by practicing mindfulness one trains to be more aware of the processes that emerge in the present moment, including the processes in one's environment, his body and mind.

There are two general forms which explain how can be mindfulness beneficial for the effectiveness of integrity self-evaluation. Through top-down regulation one can become more aware of the subtle psychical determinants of moral choice (like heuristics and intuitions) and

may choose not to react on them (Chiesa, Serretti&Jakobsen, 2013). The bottom-up regulation is based on perceiving reality more consciously through one or more of the five senses, which can help to liberate one from all present mental concepts and related emotions, including the default moral judgments (Chiesa, Serretti&Jakobsen, 2013; Muhr&Handberg, 2014). Application of mindfulness in the leadership development has already been recognized as the mindful leadership. Mindful leaders (leaders who practice mindfulness) are known for their high adaptability, emotional resilience, vigilance and creativity (Hunter &Chaskalson, 2013).

2   Methods of MALP

Methods of MALP are designed to give participants the practical tools for raising their moral awareness. MALP contains two groups of complementary practices: integrity self-evaluation and mindfulness.

2.1   Integrity self-evaluation

The main goal of integrity self-evaluation practice is the development of clearer discernment upon which of participant's behavioural, verbal and mental actions contribute to the integrity and which of them do not (or are even contrary to it).External integrity self-evaluation also contains the development of empathy.

2.1.1   External integrity self-evaluation

External integrity self-evaluation is focused on the level of compatibility of one's actions with the environment. The first part of this practice is focused on other individuals and its success is based on reversibility principle whichleads participants to analyse the consequences of the actions they imposed upon others (Gibbs, 2014). Reversibility is based on one's ability to take the perspective of the others (perspective-taking) and to self-evaluate his actions from this position. The basic tool of self-evaluation is self-asking. The general question is: *"Are my thoughts, words and actions compatible with the others?"*For more specific self-evaluation MALP also contains a set of asking philosophical rules. The most known of these rules is the Golden Rule (GR)(Bruton, 2004).The most familiar version of the Golden Rule says:*"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."*MALP also uses the negative formulation of GR, the Silver Rule (SR), which says: *"Don't do to others what you would not have them do unto you."*The third reversibility tool is Copper Rule, which has its roots in Confucianism

and has both positive expression *"Do unto others what they would have us do unto them"* and negative expression *"Do not unto others what they would not have us do unto them"* (Huang, 2005). Perspective taking is also further supported by the development of empathy, which helps participants get into the perspective of others through the feeling (Gibbs, 2014). Development of empathy in MALP is based on storytelling exercise, when revelation of life story of firstly repellent persons leads participants to the identification with those persons.

The second part of external integrity self-evaluation is focused on the compatibility between individual and the greater unit he is part of.The general question is: *"Are my thoughts, words and actions compatible with the greater unit which I am part of?"* Participants usually start from smaller units like family, company or city, and then they extend their awareness to the higher units like culture, mankind, planet earth, etc. Because this practice is more difficult to grasp byreasoning, empathy plays a very important role here. This kind of empathy is called the transcendental empathy (Senge&Krahnke, 2014) and it is based on the ability to directly feel the greater unit as an organism which one is part of. Participants learn to feel their working group as a whole living organism by trying to describeits qualities and needs.

2.1.2 Internal integrity self-evaluation

Internal integrity self-evaluation focuses on the evaluation of the compatibility between one's behavioural, verbal and mental actions.The general question concerning internal integrity is: *"Are my thoughts, words and actions compatible between themselves?"*Participants can then follow with more specific questions like: *"Do I practice what I preach?""Do I stick to my words?""Can I trust myself?""Am I honest to myself?""Are my actions consistent with my wishes?."*First of all, participants are guided to privately evaluate these questions (1-10/10) and then they are asked to find out the solutions for raising the score.

Internal integrity evaluation also contains the practice of "personal missionstatement," which is designed to help participants to more consciously recognize their motivations, preferences and aspirations. Personal mission statement is focused on answering to the three fundamental questions of "WHY", "HOW" and WHAT." This practice is further supported by the creation of the "action table," which leadsparticipants to sort out their actions into three categories, namely: "Actions which I like to doand I should do," "actions which I don't like to do but I should do" and "actions which I don't like to do and should not do." Basically, this exercise is

helpful for supporting the actions, which are consistent with one's preferences and abandoning the actions, which are not.

2.1.3 Synthesis of External and Internal Integrity

Although the self-evaluating process of both integrities is different, it should lead to the similar result, which is the moral action. From external integrity perspective, one will notlie, because he knows that he would not want to be lied if he was placed in the same position. One will stick to the word given to others, because heknows that he would like others to stick to the words given to him if he was placed in the same position, etc. From internal integrity perspective, on the other hand, one will not lie, because that would disrupt the compatibility between hisverbal and mental actions. Similarly, one will stick to his word, because that would disrupt the compatibility between hisverbal and behavioural actions, etc.Participants are frequently reminded of the complementarity and interrelatedness of both integrities. After self-evaluations from both integrity perspectives have been done, participants can start to see the connections betweenthem.

2.2 Mindfulness

The role of mindfulness training is to help participants to expand their awareness in order to be able to self-evaluate their integrity more deeply and frequently. MALP contains several practices, which are suitable for the mindfulness beginners.

2.2.1 Body Awareness

Body awareness is about giving full attention to one's body. The basic method is body scanning, which is based on gradual focusing on the various parts of the body, from head to toes (Kabat-Zinn, 1982). This exercise can also involve focusing on internal organs or the brain. Other complementary exercises of body awareness can include conscious walking (focusing solely on the process of walking) or conscious eating (focusing on the process of eating).Body awareness has many advantages. First of all, as a very understandable and simple exercise it issuitable forbeginners (most of MALP participants) (Kabat-Zinn, 1982).The early accomplishments in body awareness can also give participants good motivation to continue their training. Especiallybody scanning as it has a very relaxing impact on participants (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), which is beneficial to participant's motivation and overall

training efficiency (relaxed state is the best condition for learning and practicing new things). And finally, becausebody awareness is all about giving full attention to the senses is is perhaps the best first step to developing the bottom-up regulation (Chiesa, Serretti&Jakobsen, 2013).

2.2.2 Breathing Awareness

Breathing awareness is based on findingswhichshow that the state of our mind (and so the awareness) is related to the condition of our breathing (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). MALP includes two main breathing exercises of calming and stilling breathing. The calming breathing is useful for calming one's emotional state in challenging situations. It is based on inhaling by nose and exhaling by mouth.Still breathing can be practiced when the participantis already in acalm state. Both inhaling and exhalingare done through the nose and the goal of practice is to further extend one's breath as long as possible and make it still so that breathing won't be audible. Stilling the breath is a very efficient method for stilling the mind. Breathing itself is also very revitalizing process (for example by giving more oxygen to the brain) and so it is related to steadiness and input of more energy. Calming breathing can be well employed in every situation, when participants recognize high emotional arousal. Stilling breathing can be employed in all the other situations in order to make participants more relaxed and vigilant.

2.2.3 Bare Attention

Bare attentionhelps participants to take more non-judgmental attitudeswith the experience. It is based on dispassionate observation of anything in the present moment, without any interest or evaluation (Thera, 1962). The practiceincludes observation of one's environment and one's mind (thoughts and emotions).The purpose of this practice is to make anything the subject of non-judgmental observation in order to see things as they truly are. The main advantage of bare attention is that it leads to purification of one's attention from the interference of his formal mental concepts (opinions, attitudes, prejudices, ideas, etc.), which overshadow how things really are (Muhr&Handberg, 2014). Bare attention is supportive to the bottom-up regulation because it leads participants to perceiving thoughts and the five senses more clearly.

2.2.4 Discerningself-observation

Discerning self-observation is different from bare attention as the main goal of this practice is to develop a more precise ability to perceiveand discern all kinds of mental factors, such as

thoughts, feelings and emotions (Frýba, 1995). More specifically, discerning self-observation is essential for overcoming subtle heuristic and intuitive processes, which usually determine one's moral choice. The basic training is focused on recognition of thoughts and related emotions. Participants pass though different emotional pictures in order to take the neural stance and impartially describe what they think and feel. Self-observation is suitable for development of top-down regulation. Participants are guided to use the typical technique of registering and letting go everything, which occurs in their mind (Chiesa, Serretti&Jakobsen, 2013).

3   Educational Structure

The educational structure of MALP is designed to maintain these practical goals, they are: 1) To be understandable and acceptable for complete beginners in both fields of integrity self-evaluation and mindfulness; 2) to give participants enough time and space for understanding and practicing all methods in order to become self-reliant practitioners; 3) to be suitable for contemporary business and academic environments.These goals have been the main guideline for designing the time duration and distribution of methods.

3.1   Time duration

Duration of MALP is similar to the contemporary mindfulness programs, like MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). For its more than thirty years tradition, MBSR has proven tobe a feasible training methodin various corporate, academic and clinical environments. Therefore, similarly to MSER, duration of MALP training is also 8 weeks, witha required time of 2 hours per a week. Participants have to attend at least 7/8 sessions in order to complete the MALP training. MALP also includes a one-day (6 hours of practice) weekend retreat, which is obligatory. Overall required time for finishing the first MALP training is 20 – 22 hours.

3.2   Distribution ofmethods

Every two-hour session has a similar structure. The first 15 minutes are focused on therecapitulation of the last session (starting from second session) and theoretical introduction to the new methods. The next 40 minutes are focused on mindfulness practices and the other 40 minutes are focused on integrity self-evaluation practices.A time break (10 minutes) is included between those main parts. The last 15 minutes are focused on recapitulation of the

session, short discussion and assignment of little homework practice. Participants are also motivated to practice all the other methods in their free time.

External and internal integrity self-evaluation isequally distributed between all 8 sessions. This setting is based on the assumptionthat some participants can be more familiar with external integrity and some with internal. This setting is also designed to make the concept of interrelatedness more familiar to all participants. On the other hand, methods of mindfulness are distributedfrom the easier ones to more advanced ones in order make the whole training more feasible. The first three sessions include body awareness exercises, bare attention focused on the environment and basic introduction to breath awareness. The following three sessions also include body awareness (but on a smaller scale), complete bare attention (focused also on one's mind), complete breath awareness exercises and discriminative self-observation. The last two weeks include all the methods in full scale. The purpose of a one-day retreat (supposed to be in 6th or 7th week) is to give participantsa more intense experience with the practice and also to provide more space for discussion, sharing of experience and feedback.

4   Discussion

The discussion is focused on contributions of MALP to contemporary leadership, demonstration of its practical applications and implications for the future research.

4.1   Contributions to contemporary leadership

First of all, successful integrity self-evaluation, supported by mindfulness practice providesa good starting point for the development of integrity, which isa required quality in all of the mentioned leadership approaches. Achievement of integrity from an external perspective is consistent with the aim of transformational (Bass &Steildmeier, 1999), servant (Liden et al., 2008) and ethical leadership(Brown, Treviño& Harrison, 2005). On the other hand, achievement of integrity from internal integrity is consistent with the aim of authentic leadership (Avolio& Gardner, 2005).MALP is also a response to the current misunderstanding in the field of Mindful leadership. Some of the mindful leadership interventions have been criticized for inconsistence with original mindfulness teachings. The main concern is related to the lack of moral foundations which are an inseparable part of traditional mindfulness

development (Purser &Milillo, 2015). MALP therefore also serves as the morally based mindfulness training.

4.2   Practical Applications

MALP can be feasibly integrated into contemporary corporal and academic environments. All of the mentioned methods do not require any special setting to be successfully practiced and most of them can be applied in most everyday environments. The whole training program methods are secularized which makes MALP suitable for multicultural environments.

One training group (up to 30 participants) can be made of leaders directly from specific business units (usually working team or department), or can contain various leaders from different companies, businesses or environments. MALP is also suitable for academic environment. In the case of the business students MALP has the potential to equip inexperienced students with skills and qualities which could raise their chance to succeed in business practice (as there is a growing demand for moral and cognitive qualities of leaders). Finally, MALP can be also beneficial for the development of teaching skills of academic fellows and lecturers.

4.3   Implications for future research

This paper presents the first version of MALP. First of all, it is important to validate the MALP as leadership and mindfulness training with a positive relationship to the level of leadership, level of morality and level of mindfulness. Level of mindfulness and leadership can be most suitably measured by self-evaluative questionnaires like MAAS (Mindful Attention Awareness Scale)and MLQ (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire) (Bass &Steildmeier, 1999). Although these methods have been criticized for self-reporting bias, it still seems to be themost feasible way of validating the impact of MALP. The structure and methods of MALP should also be standardized in future. This is important for eliminating the potential effect of personal influence to the results of participants(instead of practice itself). Finally, the future form of MALP could be divided into more versions in order to better adapt to different abilities, experiences and specializations of participants.

Conclusion

There is a growing demand for moral and mindful leaders in contemporary leadership. This paper has presented Moral awareness leadership program (MALP), the new form of leadership and mindfulness trainingdesigned to raise the moral awareness of participants. Moral awareness is achieved by successful application of integrity self-evaluation and mindfulness practices. MALP is complementary to actual moral and mindful leadership development programs, as it combines both approaches in order to help leaders develop their mental faculties and moral credit.

Acknowledgment

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Contact

Marek Vich

University of Economics, Prague.

Náměstí W. Churchilla 4, 130 67 Praha 3, Czech Republic.

marek.vich@malp.cz