



Full Length Research Paper

Value matters or do values really make a difference!

Prof. Dr. K. C. Patrick Low

Ph.D. and Chartered Marketer, Certified MBTI Administrator, and Certified Behavioral Consultant/ Universiti Brunei Darussalam / Associate, University of South Australia
E-mail: patrick_low2003@yahoo.com

Abstract

In this paper, as the title suggests, through literature review and interviews, the academician-practitioner examines the significance and benefits of values from various viewpoints. Motivating or even inspiring, values serve as a source of energy for the individual, the leaders and the organization (nation). As in the study, it is shown that values, for example, the value of learning, enable self-cultivation and enhance leadership; and among other things, values also grow teamwork/spirit, a learning organization as well as build the resilience of an individual or an organization (nation). Espousing and upholding values also lead a person to be of high integrity or in the Confucian sense, a gentleperson/ lady (junzi).

Keywords: Values, core beliefs, culture, leadership success; resilience.

INTRODUCTION

What is a value?

A value is a core belief and what one strongly believes in (Low, 2009; 2002). A value is as a root, out of which, as branches, action or behavior doth spring. "Form(ing) the heart of a culture as they guide our behaviour at the unconscious level and provide the basis for our day-to-day actions" (Abdullah, 1996: 12), values are a person's "firm convictions" (Matsushita, 1994: 36); people will be consistent in what they say and do and the way they treat children (others), and they need or feel obliged to set the example. Hence, to this author, a value held and fleshed out is better than following or abiding by the rule.

To paraphrase Marcus Aurelius, our LIFE is what our VALUES make it. Low (2011) has argued that as parents and/or teachers, two of the best things one can give one's children are roots and wings. At the base level, when one instills the right values and perhaps wisdom to one's children, these values would certainly help to guide one's children as well as to trigger, motivate, develop or grow their ambitions to strive for their respective personal, academic and professional excellence, thus making them good persons and citizens.

The author would urge you with this: If you think you have a burden – having to carry or uphold these values, just remember the wonderful and inspiring story which Schiller, the German author, (cited in Kopmeyer, 2003) loved to tell the children: 'Once upon a time, the birds had no wings. They crawled about the earth. Then one day

God threw wings at their feet and commanded them to pick up the wings and carry them on their backs. At first, it seemed very difficult. The little birds did not want to carry those heavy, unwieldy wings. But they loved the Lord and, in obedience, they picked up the wings and carried them on their backs. 'And, lo, the wings fastened there! What they once had thought was a hindering weight and a burden, enabled them to fly!'. It is one of the great lessons of life, that the burdens, duty or responsibilities we lug by necessity or by choice instead of weighting us down, actually can lift us up!

There is no running away from the onus and duty of life because, truly, they are a part and parcel of life itself. Our joy or thrill in living the short time span allotted to us is in our attitude or more so, values toward our burdens and duty, in the very way in which we receive, act on and move them.

Paper's aim and objectives

The aim and objectives of the paper are to examine the importance or significance and practice of values as well as to assess the benefits and significance of values from various perspectives.

Literature Review

Value(s) at the individual level

To paraphrase the Apostle Luke (1: 34-36), values are

like the eye; one's eye is the lamp of one's body; if one's eye is healthy, one's whole body is full of light. And if one's eye is not healthy, one's whole body is full of darkness.

A value is similar to the seed without which we cannot have any fruit, a value leads to 'signpost' or guiding feeling, thinking and action or behavior. Values are principles, standards, or qualities one considers worthwhile or desirable (<http://www.providentplan.com/2036/the-importance-of-values/>).

Knowing values is essential since it helps one to understand how one ticks (Low 2006). Rather than just relying on positional power, leaders must derive their influence from values (Huey, 1994, also cited in Russell, 2001). Values in fact help managers to understand people's attitudes and motivation (Robbins and Judge, 2007: 109) and they themselves can be very motivating (Low, 2005). And perhaps, in this author's view, to quote Mahatma Gandhi, key beliefs or values can also be said to be "what I (each individual) feel(s) to be true. It sustains me (us)." (Gandhi, 1961, italics author's). In sum, core values, priorities in life (business) (Low, 2009, italics author's) are, in essence, a set of values that guide or help an individual's or organization's internal conduct as well as one's (organization's) relationship with the external world.

Values significantly impact leadership (Low, 2011c, 2010; Russell, 2001; Collins and Porras, 1997). Values also help to build one's character. Values make a person's character; with values as the foundation (Low, 2011c, 2010; Russell, 2001; Collins and Porras, 1997), he or she who does right need not fear anyone. They guide one's interactions with another or others. According to the Father of India, Mahatma Gandhi: "If wealth is lost nothing is lost" "If health is lost something is lost" "If character is lost everything is lost." Best of all things is character (<http://www.citehr.com/153374-importance-values-morals.html>).

All of us one knows that life is precious – that life is important. We all safeguard our life because we care for it more than anything else. When life is so important, the values of life are even more important or critical. Values are guiding principles, or standards of behavior which are considered desirable, vital and held in high regard by a particular society in which a person lives.

Added to this, in Asian (Chinese) societies, a gentle person/lady (junzi) upholds honor and he or she "is on the side of what is moral." (The Analects, IV, verse 10) (Lau, 1979: 73; Zhou, 2005); a sense of humiliation and shamefulness (Chi, Confucianism – Mencius says, 2009) exists, and this may deter a person from committing a fraud or wrong-doing. Holding certain values can lead a person/ leader to be upright and doing things from honest to goodness; values can thus help to fight against

corruption. Authentic leadership is practiced here; it is defined as leaders having "a conscious and well-developed sense of values. They act in ways that are consistent with their value systems, so authentic leaders have a highly evolved sense of moral right and wrong" (Quick and Nelson, 2013: 395).

Value(s) at the corporate level

Rather than hanging values like works of art or decorative items – perhaps best done by companies that do not know and/or practice the power of values, the best organizations understand their values, articulate them clearly, and hold them higher than any short-term concerns or short-cut methods. And the values become the source of their competitive advantage (Cohen, 2006). Take for example, what Gallagher (2003: 49) has indicated, that is, by creating a core value of treating people well, a "Motivator" (or people who recognize that no matter what their business processes are, their success revolves around their people's commitment) creates a positive working environment. He or she knows that his or her own team will ultimately lead the charge to accomplish everything else that the organization needs to thrive. Company leadership and management thus parades those values as practical guides to making day-to-day decisions, managing and motivating people, and rewarding performance. Leaders and managers in these organizations are held responsible, above all, for modeling the company's affirmed values in their day-to-day behavior (Peters, 1983).

Values are indeed about attaining results in a way that is consistent or unflinching with what an organization stands for. They allow the organizational members and others to see what the organization stands for (<http://www.learningforward.org/PDK/LFRchapter11.pdf>). They supply a direct link or connection between the CEO, the ordinary clerk or worker and everyone in between; and form the basis of the organization's brand as understood by employees, customers, suppliers and even shareholders. When the work is done right, values provide an organizing and unifying principle, a directional compass that helps organizations succeed; they become a source of energy for an organization's vision, strategy and day-to-day efforts. Besides, Low (2011a: 93) has also argued that when recruiting and selecting talents and to retain them well, the organization should ensure that there is a good value ("priorities") match between the selected person(s) and the recruiting/hiring organization.

Value(s) within a culture

The development of a culture shows that it is consisted of various elements, and each of these elements has a

different production and development process. Some modify little over time, whereas others can be subject to quite rapid changes. The key elements of a cultural system are commonly identified as: language, both spoken and written religion, customs, rites and rituals, and norms of behavior artistic forms: dramas, music, painting and others and the shared or core value system. Outstanding leaders must continually renew or regenerate excellent values in organizations (Gardner, 1990). DuBrin (2007: 338) speaks of values as “the foundation of any organizational culture”; values form the basis (Low, 2009, 2002), and in most ways, represents the submerged or hidden portion of the cultural iceberg. Take for example, from Chinese opera, opera experts say that one can understand the traditional values and social ideology of the Chinese. And in Chinese opera, the painted faces of the characters or performers, the use of the fan(s) and various hand movements seek to convey the inner meanings, certain beliefs and ideas.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a series of interviews – each time appropriately 45 minutes though some interviews did stretch to an hour plus – conducted with a total of thirty-five human resource practitioners or professionals, working in Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore. These interviews were done during the 10-month period, that is, from 16 January 2011 to 15 November 2011. The researcher’s interviews with Singapore interviewees were done during his self-financed return-trip leave days to Singapore.

The study relies on the qualitative research method. Much qualitative data were collected from the interviewees, and the deployed semi-structured interview method was useful. Jankowicz (2005: 269) highlighted that such semi-structured interview method is a good technique for questions dealing with feelings, and here, they are appropriate for this research; values hold much feelings or convictions.

It is also worthy to note that similar to Low’s (2006) study, being assured of confidentiality and anonymity, the interviewees also expressed themselves freely. And to get more information and data from the various interviewees, the researcher used open-ended questions. (Cavana, Delahaye and Sekaran, 2001). These questions included, for example, “how do you perceive value?”, “what is value to you?” and “what are the importance (significance; benefits) of value(s) to you?” During the interviews, as highlighted by Gillham (2004: 45), “prompts” were, on several occasions, used; the researcher used, for example, a simple “What about?” Prompts were useful to go hand-in-hand with the questions so that the interviewees spoke or clarified further.

For several interviewees, this researcher followed up with email interviews which provide a permanent record of what was said, and here, they help eliminate any error introduced through incorrect transcription (Selwyn and Robson, 1998 cited in Jankowicz, 2005: 270).

FINDINGS

Thirty-two participants or 91.42 percent opined that “(with) values the leader upholds, (s)he leads well”.

While thirty-two participants or 91.42 percent voted that values “help set the standards for the organization’s employees”, “values indicate what is right and what is wrong”, thirty-one participants or 88.57 percent expressed that in “knowing” and “understanding the values of the other party helps one to know them better” (several respondents’ inputs). Interestingly these can be taken as being seen by the other party that one is being empathetic. And “that we know them and their needs”. “It helps us to negotiate with them better”.

Twenty-eight participants or 80 percent spoke of “knowing the values of the other party (OP) helps us to build rapport as well as relationships with them” (several respondents’ inputs).

Interestingly, twenty-six or 74.28 percent highlighted that “values give us something in common, and they serve as a basis of unity”. “We share the same values” (several respondents’ comments).

Twenty-five participants or 71.42 percent expressed that “we follow our values and act accordingly”; “our values tell us to do what is good for us” (several respondents’ inputs).

Other comments, a potpourri (see Table 1), received from twenty-two participants or 62.85 percent were categorized under miscellaneous and analyzed. These comments include: “we are operating in the global arena” or that “the world has shrunk”. “Values also help the company to control its employees; they sort of serve as a boundary markers for the employees – how to act and what to do”. “Certain values held give us strength. We’ve in mind the values of learning and pro-activeness; we continue to be active and are determined to succeed. We learn and live.” “We grow.”

Table 1 shows key responses verbalized by the interviewees. And they are then categorized as follows:

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Why values really count?

And indeed “leaders focus on the soft stuff. People. Values. Character. Commitment. A cause. All of the stuff that was supposed to be too goo-goo to count in business. Yet it’s the stuff that real leaders take care of

Table 1. The Interviewees' Responses on Values.

Responses	Number of Interviewees	Percentage (%) of Interviewees
Lead well with the values one upholds "With the values that the leader upholds, (s)he leads well"; "values make for a strong leadership". "The leader's personal courage embodies the values they hold"; "people would follow the leader; he knows his values (goals) and have the compass".	32	91.42
Supply the standards for the individual/ organization "Help set the standards for the organization's employees", "values indicate what is right and what is wrong."	32	91.42
Direct one's/ our actions "We follow our values and act accordingly"; "our values tell us to do what is good for us". "Our company believes in putting people first, hence we are pulled to act as such."	32	91.42
Help to know the other party better "Knowing" and "understanding the values of the other party helps one to know them better". One is perceived as being empathetic. And "that we know them and their needs". "It helps us to negotiate with them better"	31	88.57
Serve as a bridge to (know better and) relate "Knowing the values of the other party (OP) helps us to build rapport as well as relationships with them". "And also motivate people"	28	80
Provide a base for teamwork "Values give us something in common, and they serve as a basis of unity" "We share the same values". "We work together for the same purpose or reasons".	26	74.28
Other comments (Potpourri) "We are operating in the global arena" or that "the world has shrunk"; "organization without good values will not make it, they will not do well. On the other hand, companies with green values and are socially responsible" are likely to be liked or get good support from their customers and other stakeholders" "Values also help the company to control its employees; they sort of serve as a boundary markers for the employees – how to act and what to do". "Values – what we strongly believe in – give us strengths. We've in mind the values of learning and pro-activeness; we learn, continue to be active and are, in fact, determined to succeed." "My father, who can be said to be a Confucian and in that sense – very Chinese, taught me to work hard in life in order to survive. Overtime, I believe in it. Now, I'm living comfortably; working hard, being disciplined and achieving are my values and I believe and subscribe to them."	22	62.85

first. And forever." Tom Peters, cited in Pockell and Avila (2007: 62, italics author's emphasis).

(In terms of Confucian values, Mencius pointed out that, "A Junzi with lofty (noble, important and admirable) ideals would not hesitate to have his dead body abandoned in the wilderness and a Junzi with moral courage would not spare his life to do what is right

(Mencius said: "Chester did not forget in the gully, the Warriors did not forget the funeral of their element" Hanyu Pinyin: Mèng Zǐ yuē: "zhì shì bù wàng zài gōu hè, yǒng shì bù wàng sāng yuán"; Mencius says, 2009: 195). "The leader's personal courage embodies the values they hold." "Without any firm values, a person would go about in life in total darkness, and he is without much guide or

direction.” On the contrary, “values – what we strongly believe in – give us strengths” (several interviewees’ inputs). Yes, values are critically important, and here are the key reasons...

Values matter most especially in: Building and enhancing leadership

To paraphrase what Lao Tzu, the Chinese philosopher once said, to understand another (one’s followers) is a show of great intelligence, to understand oneself is a show of genius. One really needs to know oneself, one’s values and indeed make one’s (others’) life (lives) count (Low, 2011c: 12, italics author’s).

Thirty-two participants or 91.42 percent opined that “(with) values the leader upholds, (s)he leads well”. They are referring to value-based or inner leadership, leading inside -out. This coincides with what has been highlighted by Hess and Cameron (2006), that is, value-based leaders serve others in a positive way. A positive way includes the way in which they lead; the manner they treat their followers; the integrity they uphold and the ultimate morality of the objectives or results. Clawson (1999: 46-49, cited in Russell, 2001) maintains that honesty and integrity form the moral foundation of effective leadership through the four key values of truth telling, promise keeping, fairness; and respect for the individual. Interestingly and perhaps more critically, Gandhi urged us to cultivate these higher virtues or principles (values) for their own sake and for our own purification, but not for any reward.

Giving a sense of purpose, values direct leaders; a leader follows his or her values and acts accordingly. Values serve almost like the conscience of the leader. “We follow our values and act accordingly”; “our values tell us to do what is good for us” (Thirty-two participants/ 91.42 percent of the total number of participants expressed this). One can thus say that values supply individuals or leaders with the clarity of vision, ideas and actions, and indeed “people with clear minds are like magnets” (Wilma Mankiller, cited in <http://www.learningforward.org/PDK/LFRchapter11.pdf>) and leaders, through the values they espouse, drive organizational behavior at every level to achieve the vision and increase the effectiveness of the organization.

Great leaders should also put in place the necessary infrastructure and develop, hardwire or grow organizations that are built to last. Leaders “lives the message by example” (Baldoni, 2003: 169; Baldoni, 2009). Leaders need to set the example (Low, 2013; Baldoni, 2003; McCormack, 1990) and be the role model, showing and even inspiring the people what he stands for as well as the values held. People in the company need to see that behavior is echoed by the leaders. Employees see what the leader pays attention to, measure and control, and when a leader spending time with customer or give a helping hand with an employee, the rhetoric or

expression of “we’re a caring company” becomes real (DuBrin, 2007; Baldoni, 2003). Values indeed make a leader, and in the Confucian sense, a leader is like the North Star (Low, 2011c, 2010; Collins and Porras, 1997). We can also see in the Mahatma, he embodied and practiced what he held dearly – the value of truth, non-violence and humility (ahimsa), and in his fight for India’s independence, he might hate the wrong doings or the sins, but he never hated the sinner. He conquered India in a flash, winning the hearts and minds of the Indian masses (Merton, 1996; Gandhi, 1961).

Here, it is worthy to note Low’s (2007: 8) comments, citing Collins and Porras (1997), he highlighted that: “Built to Last”, great leaders, on the whole, should be building clocks instead of “telling the time”. Having a great idea or being a charismatic visionary leader amounts to time telling. “Many Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) stress systems and processes, and think that they by themselves will create the required momentum. But systems and processes without values are not adequate”. Values are indeed critical in building clocks. Visionary leaders, whose ideas last long after they are gone, build strong companies or institutions. And they lead well.

We can thus argue that leadership is really the driving force of organizations and that leadership has played a key role in every profit or nonprofit organization (nation). Leaders’ capability and behavior may personify strong ethical values in organizational culture; they change organizational structures by exercising their influence over organizations; they create corporate culture; and they take the initiative for changing the organizations. In practice, leadership is not only a core factor for executing and administrating, but also a significant part for the creating a new organizational culture. In short, leadership is considered as an essential element or a core value in organizational culture. And we can also say that in a way, leadership and organizational culture are intertwined and inseparable. Leaders reinforce and help perpetuate the corporate values.

Here, Tichy (1997) has highlighted that, “if you are not teaching, you’re not leading. If you want to become a teacher, the best place to start is by developing your own teachable points of view about ideas, values, emotional energy and edge”. (This author would add that one leads by teaching through one’s examples. Please see Low (2013) - Chapter 2). Becton Dickenson University adopted this principle and uses powerful stories to convey leadership values; all effective leaders have points of views on topics that are vital to their success and the success of their organizations. The benefit of doing this is also that, over the years, it has raised standards and awareness for those working in the management and leadership roles in the Becton Dickenson Company (BD). This is done by elevating its expectations for results and the company has been have increasingly been achieving the expected results. It is clearly evident that continuous learning and improve-

The way one manages when one has NOTHING means

One is prudent.
 One stands tall – one doesn't cheat or bully;
 one maintains one's integrity.
 One gets results.
 One values resources.
 One values people.
 One shows care and concern for one's people.

Figure 1. Shows the way one manages when one has nothing.

The way one behaves when one has EVERYTHING means

One is humble – NOT proud.
 One is (still) prudent.
 One stands tall – one is NOT greedy,
 one gives; one shares.
 One (still) values resources.
 One (still) values people.
 One (still) shows care and concern for one's people.

Figure 2. Shows the way one manages when one has everything; one still sticks to one's values.

ments are the key factors for the success in the performance of the company's top associates and leaders, as well as in their work processes (Betof, 2007).

Linking values, leadership and success

This author strongly believes that values, leadership, and success in life are closely related. Values supply an individual or a leader the standards and set the goals for a leader to achieve. They ensure his or her consistency to a purpose. "People would follow the leader; he knows his values (goals) and have the compass" (interviewees' inputs); this coincides with Trout's (2004: 129) "no one will follow if you don't know where you're going." Besides, when the leader's values permeate to the organization (Low, 2009, 2002; Kilcourse, 1994; Schein, 1992), the values serve as a direction and compass for the people

to follow and to act independently and interdependently dutifully and publicly (Kouzes and Posner, 1993).

Moss (1994: 94; italics author's) speaks of "to be a successful manager, (one needs to) learn the skills of leadership". In this respect, in the author's view, two things help success in life: One, the way one manages when one has nothing; and two, the way one manages when one has everything. Values persist. Sticking to one's values and key principles, one remains humble, and one continues to be prudent, resilient and is determined to getting results and output (See Figures 1 and 2).

Setting the standards for performance

Values "help to set the standards for the organization's employees" (several participants' inputs). Most partici-

pants or a significant 91.42 percent of the total number of interviewees agreed that values provide a sense of right and wrong as well as setting the criteria for the organization's performance. This coincides with what DuBrin (2007: 338) has indicated, that is, "values guide behavior on a daily basis".

Like a yardstick, values also "help set the standards for the organization's employees", and "direct (one's) our actions" (several participants' inputs). Interestingly, values alone are not enough; it is the awareness by the people within the organization of these shared meanings that are important; besides, it is the extensive sharing of them that makes a difference (Deal and Kennedy, 1988: 36). And that also leads to actions and results.

Knowing the followers/ the other party better

Thirty-one participants or 88.57 percent of the total number of participants expressed that "knowing" and "understanding the values of the other party helps one to know them better". One is perceived as being empathetic. And "that we know them and their needs". "It helps us to negotiate with them better". Knowing your people's values is good; one can then help to motivate them (Robbins and Judge, 2007); as a leader, one knows better what one's people want.

Besides, similarity of interests and values helps; "like poles attract" (Low, 2001: 54), and it helps to establish common ground for better dealing or better rapport between parties in a deal or negotiation (Low, 2010a). If one knows the other party's values well, one would be better able to influence the other party. Knowing the other party's values well would lead the other party to favor or prefer one; after all, one is showing care and concern and is not culturally passive or indifferent towards the other party (Mattock, 1999).

This logically then leads to...

Fostering better rapport-building and having good communications

Twenty-eight participants or 80 percent of the total number of participants expressed that "knowing the values of the other party (OP) helps us to build rapport as well as relationships with them". These can be assessed as: A follower would certainly like or prefer a leader who really knows him (her) and his (her) values. A good leader should really be someone who really knows how the people feel and tick; (s)he is in touch with the grassroots. People need to see that you care about what you are doing and what you are communicating. You "communicate (your) passion, convictions or values" (Baldoni, 2003: 168, italics author's). The other parties or audience will get the idea what you are saying is

important and they pay attention; the message got through and in fact, better still, it sticks.

Putting people first

To put people first is critical, and this is "the greatest value in life... selfless dedication." For the Confucians, benevolence and the die-hard commitment to do good and to serve others is a good value to practice (Low, 2011b). "Our company believes in putting people first, hence we are pulled to act as such" (Twenty-five participants or 71.42 percent of the total number of participants expressed this).

Feeling that people are their most important investment they can make, "Team Builders" see their organizations as people who serve each other as "internal customers," who in turn provide the same excellent service to their external customers (Gallagher, 2003: 73 -95).

In companies where the core values lie in putting people first, people are trained and cared for; they are considered as important resources. Note that "well-managed companies place great emphasis on training. Training is not limited to skills and knowledge, but expanded toward attitudes and ways of thinking." (Inaba, 1996:14).

This value of putting people first coincides, to cite an example, with Fedex Freight's Take Care of Our People", its number one Business Principle. It also includes building a people-centric corporate culture: "At our Company, we do not want our people to all come from the same mold. We do not want our people to become numbers. We want individuals. We recognize that all people have strengths. Our job is to identify and accentuate those strengths, combining them in pursuit of common goals. We owe our people opportunity, trust and respect." (Hess and Cameron, 2006: 45).

DuBrin (2007) also points out that a positive value (such as the value of putting people first) contributes to a healthy corporate culture that is a high regard for human welfare; here, it is good that such a value is exhibited and effected in programs and policies that enhance employee health and well-being.

Boosting marketing, increasing the market share and enhancing the company's growth

"Organization without good values will not make it, they will not do well. On the other hand, companies with green values and are socially responsible are likely to be liked or get good support from their customers and other stakeholders" (several participants' inputs). These coincide with Low (2007), that is, values help to build the Company's reputation and brands too. The Company's

value(s) can thus attract consumers or certain target audience that shares its value(s).

Interestingly, Low and Ang's (2011) study has highlighted that from Confucius comes the emphasis on filial piety which is linked to positive, harmonious relationships as well as to the value of quality service and service excellence that bring many benefits to business prosperity; they speak of Confucian marketing among the overseas Chinese in South-east Asian countries including Muslim-majority Brunei Darussalam.

Nurturing an organization's (nation's) unity

"Values give us something in common, and they serve as a basis of unity" "The group or the team shares the same values". "We work together for the same purpose or reasons" (several participants' inputs). Indeed shared values serve as a base for teamwork and give a sense of unity to members of a group or organization (nation) (Low, 2009; 2002).

Promoting nation (organization) building

Members within the group (the nation) identify with the core values the group (the nation) holds, and that binds the members of the group (the nation) together. Values such as sense of unity and/or loyalty (zhong) help to build the nation, bringing the people together as well as galvanizing a sense of belonging, unity and even loyalty. Low (2009, 2002) has indicated that the value of a sense of unity has been forged by the Singapore government since the self-governing days, and is one of the twelve core values of the island-Republic.

Developing cultural empathy

And indeed this reflects better understanding of others.

Nowadays, "we are operating in the global arena"; "the world has shrunk" (interviewees' inputs). People travel to do business, meet with foreign customers, suppliers and investors.

And with Internet, mobiles and other technologies, many of us are complacent or lazy about communicating at human level. Here all the more, culture or values matter (Mattock, 1999). It is good to be empathetic to other parties (people of other countries/foreigners) when doing business. And this is also applicable when attracting investors to one's country; one should see things from another's angle rather than myopically from one's perspective only. (Here, Confucius's Golden Rule: Do unto others what one wants others to do unto one, and the Reverse Golden Rule: Do not do unto others what one does not want others do not unto one, becomes

relevant.) In a shrinking world, we should be less insular – in fact, be better at dealing with unfamiliar perceptions and behavior. Indeed it is better for us to know what things matter to others or in other words, what their values or priorities are.

Cultivating self-growth while building resilience

Misery wants one's company, but one does not have to let it in the door (Mason, 2003). When one encounters problem(s) or difficulties, one can build one's resilience by way of applying the values one upholds; one can relate to and apply the values of learning and self-cultivation to be strong and happy.

"The value of learning helps. Here, we see the values of learning and pro-activeness in action. We learn, we continue to be active and are, in fact, determined to succeed. We grow. We act and realize our goals and objectives" "Look at the Japanese, they fell yet they help themselves – they are strong; they are rebuilding themselves after the 11 March tsunami disaster" (several interviewees' inputs).

Low (2007) argued that through the value of learning, Singapore becomes resilient; we see "a new Singapore" (Minchin, 1986: 236), "learning quickly and systematically (which) is critical for surviving in the 21st century" (Marquardt, 1999: 7-15, italics author's). In a fast-changing world, emphasis is placed on systematic problem-solving, experimentation, learning from experience, learning from others and transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the company. And these five activities form the core of what has become known as learning organizations (Dessler, 1997). The value of learning is thus being molded as one of the Singaporean core values (Low, 2009; 2002).

Additionally, the value of working hard (achievement and discipline), "first things first" (Ricotti, 2012) can be argued as helping a person to build his or her resilience (Fritz, 2003). "My father, who can be said to be a Confucian and in that sense – very Chinese, taught or trained me to work hard in life in order to survive. Overtime, I believe and live by it. Now, I'm living comfortably. My values are working hard and achieving; disciplined, I believe and subscribe to them." (one interviewee's inputs). These coincide with what Low (2009, 2002) has classified as the value of achievement, being achievement-oriented has enabled one to work hard. And be a die-hard; he or she survives and succeeds. They also fit in with what Khoo (2001: 62) has indicated of the Chinese Malaysian corporate leaders such as Dato Teh and his children; they "say the discipline instilled in them during the hard times is the backbone of their success". "Tenacity, patience, perseverance and capacity for hard work" were Dato Teh's hallmarks.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the paper establishes the importance, key benefits and significance of values whether at the individual, corporate and/or national level. The values espoused by the leaders make them fighting fit, and one would not throw in the towel; they also build the leaders boldness, tenacity and perseverance. "When one believes in good value(s), one would stick to and practice them according to what one believes in. Therefore, the significance of value is to help an individual to lead a good living; and also have a meaningful relationship with other people and environment" (several interviewees' inputs). Values energize the individual, the leadership and the organization. As the study in the paper shows, some values such as the value of learning enable self-cultivation and enhance leadership; among other things, values also grow teamwork/spirit, a learning organization as well as build the resilience of an individual, the team or an organization (nation).

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