

# **Philosophy and Business Management: Multiple-Case Study of Selected Western and Local Institutions in Taiwan**

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## **Abstract**

This study is to examine the philosophical value in relation to business management within organisation and then explore which value is applicable to the modern Chinese structure. As a result of this study, there has no single model that is absolutely appropriate to both of business and people in one way or the other. Both of Chinese and Western philosophical ways of doing business have merits and weaknesses as illustrated. In this sense it is concluded that philosophical approach in doing business within Chinese structure will be erected in a way of “Middle of the Road” according to the theory emerged from this study.

## **1. Introduction**

As modern Western cross-national enterprises expanding their business scope to East and South Asian countries, there arise growing interests in how Western philosophy is in relation to business management within Chinese structure. The central Western value of individualisation and selfhood [52] is emphasised in Western society. This philosophical thought is a basis for Western managerial style and then influences interaction between managers and workers. With overseas branch company, Western managers are concerned with how well core value of parent company can fuse Chinese character of philosophy and personality traits of Chinese [17, 61]. In particular, somehow, alignment between philosophical value of Western parent company and structure of local organisation is essential to improve managing effectiveness and worker productivity [22]. The alignment may need adjustment while considering whether Western model is fitted into Chinese work group. Whiteley [53] also noted that values and strategy must be in accord with organisational structure and its appraisal system. Consequently, to provide an overall framework for how this study looks at reality from different perspectives, those arguments necessitate a systematic review of the nature of reality on philosophical worldview both in Chinese and Western society.

After reviewing the relevant literature, based on that conceptualised theory, this study will properly consider examination of an argument of "Following the individualistic and self centered approach of Western business will present no problems for Chinese enterprises (structure), particularly for those in Taiwan". As pointed out by Whiteley, Cheung and Zhang [55], Western people were free to debate and critically keep questioning until statements were proved. By contrast, within Chinese business framework, power distance [20] works to repress low-level workers and discourage them from self-expression and creativity [19]. Serious relevant attempts to transplant Western business philosophy and scientific method [45] into Chinese business organisation have been observed within last two decades, by either Western multi-national enterprise or modern local firm in Taiwan [51]. Nevertheless, not all of them were successful. This argument comes from the observation that, because of inherent paternalistic characters [15], Chinese

managers are still somewhat close-minded to their workers [22].

To look at the holistic view of Chinese model as opposed to the separated approach of the West, this study utilise the case study method [63] to explore the phenomenon of organisational conflicts and discuss whether Western value is applicable to modern Chinese (Taiwan) business society. In order to reflect realities of participants involved in the research environment, fieldnotes [43] and PATOP model [53] will be employed to guide the study and uncover critical issues from observations of interaction between managers and workers whilst there have conflicts within organisational structure. Based on Hofstede's five dimensions [20], through dialectic review with literature, this study will seek for relevance and further construct its theory that is synthesis of Chinese and Western value.

## **2. Research Procedures**

In order to explore how philosophical value influences a particular business (social) situation, role or interaction [32], this research will be conducted by qualitative procedures. Ontologically, in qualitative paradigm, the realities of things be investigated are mentally constructed and multi-subjective [6]. Following the assumption of epistemology [14, 16, 36], this study will report these realities relying on languages (voices) and interpretations of informants involved. Furthermore, through continuous interactions, this study will seek different perspectives of informants [5] and will observe the realities by acting as an insider that has subjective, interpersonal and value-laden view [30]. Thus, methodologically, a qualitative approach that emphasises authenticity, relevance and contextual applicability is used [54].

### **2.1 The Case Study and PATOP Research Design**

This study will utilise the multi-case study method. According to Yin [63], although there have traditional criticisms on the case study method, it is preferred in examining contemporary events within real life context. The case study method includes two sources of evidences: direct observation and systematic interviewing. Through these two distinctive characteristics of the case study strategy, it contributes uniquely to the knowledge of organizational phenomena [63].

This study will also use the model of Philosophy (Values), Assumptions, Theory of Organising and Practices [53]; namely PATOP, as an instrument to investigate cases selected. PATOP model is a method of critical thinking and involves a hierarchy of questioning that allows this study to comprehend what they were thinking about philosophical value and how they acted in certain critical events within Western and Chinese structure in the sample cases. Specifically, this model seeks to logically contrast Western thinking with the more relational thinking of Chinese philosophy while synthesizing them in one core business framework.

### **2.2 Setting**

There have three cases selected to this study. The participating companies are from banking industry including foreign and private local owned financial service institutions. In order to diversify range of industry and verify perception from different sectors, a university in central Taiwan is selected.

### 2.3 Informant

Primary informants hold key positions within the organisations and are well experienced and qualified to represent the structure where they actually live. Those are purposive sample sets to serve the research goal. Table 1 displays backgrounds of the informants.

**Table 1 The Informant Profile**

Case	Title	Function	Work Year	Setting
A	Manager	Financial Service/Sales Head of Division	> 10 years	Foreign Held
B	Senior Clerk	Operation Teller	> 3 years	Local Held
C	Professor	Director of Library	> 10 years	Campus

### 2.4 Event

Through interviewing with key informants, based on their realities, this study observes the interaction between actors and counter parties while approaching problems as well as explore “how” and “why” of that phenomenon and conflict occurred. During the process of reviewing, particular attention will be paid to five parameters: value, mission, strategy, communication and practise in each different case situation. The guiding information narrated by each informant is summarised in brief.

#### **(1) Case A (Organisational Change) – Interaction between top and mid-level manager in Western Structure**

// With no prior notice or communication, the retail banking organisation changed. I was assigned to outsourcing unit, as division head. Since this is very new function to the company and there is not any similar function for other competitors in Taiwan, before we kick off this new game, my strategy is really to communicate with my executive vice president about its legitimacy and market acceptance. I feel frustrated because my boss responds slowly and I am not familiar with her since I have never worked with her before. . Resources are not distributed sufficiently. And all my partners within the unit are distressed . . . . //.

#### **(2) Case B (Work Performance) – Interaction between worker, supervisor and branch manager in Chinese Structure**

// My supervisor keeps tolerating my partner’s ineffective daily counter transaction performance for a long time. However, his annual appraisal result is rated “A”, the highest one among all other tellers. Branch manager decides this annual appraisal report. My direct supervisor realize my partner’s performance is actually not satisfied and tries to discuss this situation with branch manage. However, she has written records to show branch manager the reality. All my supervisor can say is “sorry” to us and mentions that she has already tried . . . . , and emphasise that “my partner has very good relationship with branch manager” . . . . //

### **(3) Case C (Alumni Reunion) – Interaction between the president and the director for alumni affair in Chinese Structure (University campus)**

// Alumni reunion is a big annual event. Every year, the university will hold banquet for those come for home reunion. The director has been responsible for arranging banquet form many years. For past years, the banquet is free charge to every one. However, the president who expects to generate some revenue and reduce cost in terms of efficiency does not favor this. The director is somewhat dogmatic and insists on remaining banquet as free of charge. The president tries to persuade him to seek for issuing “meal coupon” instead of “free”. Avoiding directly to reject his proposal and make him embarrassed, the president call for a meeting and discuss this issue . . . . . //

### **3. Findings**

Each of the three cases demonstrates an overall subjective response to organisational conflicts, reflecting environmental and contextual factors that eventually determine the reality informants have. Fieldnotes analysis [43] and PATOP model [53] are conducted to critically interpret the findings.

#### **3.1 Demographic Data**

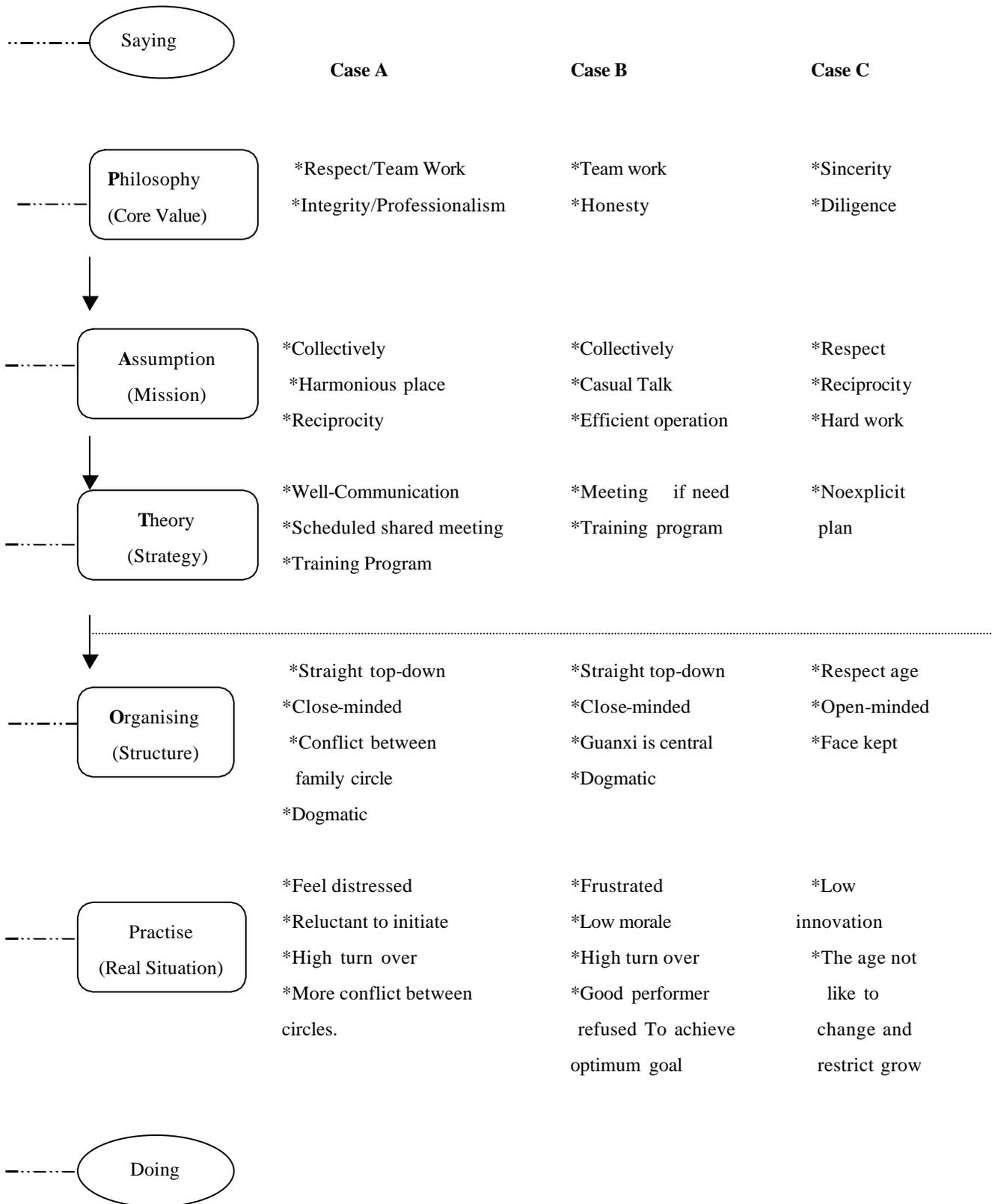
Certain demographic characteristics are ascribed to key actors’ profile in each case. In case A, with over 15 years foreign-held bank experience, executive vice president is female, married, and at age of 45. She attained educational level of local college. As to middle manager, with ten years related experience in financial service, received his Western master degree and at age of 38. In case B, teller, frontline supervisor and branch manager, are local college graduated and at age of 28, 33 and 45 respectively. Their bank experience are three, eight and 12 years respectively. In case C, the president received his doctoral degree from the West and at age of 50. In addition to teaching, he has experienced administrative and academic affairs on campus for over ten years. The counter party has local master degree and at ages of 60, a full-time administrative staff who has been responsible for alumni affairs for many years.

#### **3.2 Bedrock of Organisation-Philosophy, Assumption and Theory**

Following PATOP model [53], philosophy, assumption and theory are key organising principles related to company vision, mission and strategy [53]. Internally, regarding company vision, it is observed that the affective and emotional needs of workers are accepted within all three cases. Namely, the terminologies of “respect”, “professionalism”, and “team work” are identified as central elements to describe this core value. With those descriptors, the company mission is to construct a harmonious superior-subordinate relationships with respecting for each other, a well-communicated working environment where has multifaceted training program for all workers and proper decoding information transmitting channel [37] between managers and workers, and a resource collectively distributed system where every member within the structure can share both benefit and obligation based on reciprocity. To realise this assumption, strategically, training workshop for case B is occasionally conducted to reinforce its ideation not only for the clarity of the assumption but also to ensure if the communication and training is effective. In case A, an open communication system including training is actually erected within human resource department where help workers reflect their thought about conflicts and arrange training workshop on monthly basis. However, for case C, it is found there has no such process to implement the assumption (mission). The value and mission are remained as a conceptualization to members within the structure. Figure 1 shows business philosophical value, mission and strategy

for all three cases.

**Figure 1 Finding in the Cases**



In view of the all three cases, what they are saying: philosophy, assumption and theory centers on narrowing gaps between workers who use figurative and metaphorical language [78] and managers who use formal language [53]. Nevertheless, regarding strategy to implement their value and mission, action plan for case A under Western structure is more explicit than that for the other two cases B and C within Chinese structure.

### **3.3 Practise-What Happen in the Workplace**

A second finding shown in Figure 1 indicates what they actually do inside the workplace where can be observed from three elements: structure, system and process.

#### **(1) Structure**

In the structure, this study will examine the patterns of decision-making, power status and problem solving. Case A is found that executive vice president conveys her message to workers in a very straight top-down way while making decision without communicating with middle-level managers and / or workers and explaining “why” of business decision. The supervision is closed by high degree of power distance [20]. In case B, branch manager makes decision and is close-minded to supervisor and worker [22]. Thus, status of supervision is still shown hierarchically. As for case C, the management is seemingly opened while choosing alternatives. However, it is seen that the president indirectly tries to turn down director’s idea by a way of peer review in the group. Interestingly, in all three cases within different settings, there is a common phenomenon that managers avoid taking “problem solving” as their own responsibility. Namely, managers prefer to enjoy having “power” rather than seeking for “solution” collectively.

#### **(2) System**

From the perspective of communication system, workers are explicitly encouraged to express what they think about their jobs and company policy in a formal way, except for case C. Although this communication channel has been erected, it is found that workers tend to interact with managers by using informal transmission way. Regarding reward and control system within the structure, case A shows well-constructed incentive program and evaluation system by using scientific method [45] of MBO [37] and performance tracking report. However, in case B and C, there have no such reward and goal-setting criteria for performance evaluation. As a result, it is observed that good-performing workers cannot be recognised and are reluctant to pursue higher achievement. Training program and career map are found essential to workers in case A and C whilst there has no such arrangement for workers in case B. The study shows that the lack of training program and career planning result in low motives of workers and then may influence their capabilities. Moreover, in case A, this study discovers that although within the same reporting line, no matter how much effort mid-level manager (actor) tries to negotiate, executive vice president distribute less resource to him simply because there has no previous work relationship in between.

#### **(3) Process**

In the process, it is found “socialisation” is central to interaction between managers and workers. For example, in particular, in case B, the process of appraisal tends to be human subjective and is conducted based on point

of view of branch manager alone. This is because there has no standard performance indicator (SPI) that can be referred within the structure. The performance of workers heavily relies on how well they interact with managers during daily social life at workplace.

#### **4. The Philosophy of Doing Business**

The philosophical value tends to influence behavior of individual, group and organisation within business structure. That ideology develops patterns of action and reaction as they respond to internal environmental changes such as leadership, conflict and adjustment [37] and various external challenges coming from market competition and business innovation. Perception, attitude, value and motivation [37] are central elements that determine quality of interaction within organisation and then affect organisational effectiveness or performance. However, at its first stance, the philosophical view is a paramount importance and decides the principled approach of doing business. Table 2 indicates differential features between Chinese and Western philosophy.

##### **4.1 Cosmogony and Creation**

In order to explore the root of two different philosophical approaches for doing business in Chinese and Western management systems, the fundamental ideas of Chinese and Western philosophies: cosmogony and creation; need to be reviewed firstly.

Mote [38] noted that the Chinese philosophy regarded the world as uncreated and considered human beings as forming the primary features of a spontaneously self-generating cosmos where there has no God. In that sense Chinese cosmological thinking explains that all components of the entire universe can be integrated into one whole and that they all interact as participants in one organismic life process [38, 52]. Tu [49, pp.35-8] also argued that, in the Chinese worldview, “all modalities of humans were organically connected”. In that view, spontaneously self-generating life process consists of three key factors: continuity through the ages, wholeness and dynamism, which are organismic wholeness and interconnectedness [52].

Although the early Chinese people have a cosmos view that there is no creator or God, in fact, Chinese of all ages have accepted that spiritual beings exist and “they somehow exist apart from normal human life” [38, p.17]. Vulgarly rather than philosophically, spirits sometimes began to resemble gods. As of result, it may clarify why Chinese people can inject religions into ancestral worship [52]. Whiteley [52, p.4] also observed, “In some sort of strange way, the religious tenets become part of the self-generating cosmos”. Thereby the significance of religion is in accordance with the spirit of cosmos. Mote [38] whereas argued that concept was somewhat colored by vulgarized Buddhist notions of transmigration. An example is where Chinese people revere deceased ancestors because of their spirits would continue to linger about no matter when finally they return to the otherworldly flux. That reincarnated concept also influences interaction pattern of Chinese people in society. In Chinese society, an observation can be found that within structure some people would feel them more obliged to tolerate repression from the upper echelons because of fatalism [29].

Western people have inherited the Judeo-Christian ideas about the creation of the world by a creator or God [38]. Whiteley [52] argued that it was in contrast to Chinese worldview that organismic process replaced creator.

Tarnas [46] noted that Westerners believed in acts of God and the events of human experience constituted one reality.

To some

**Table 2 Chinese Philosophy v. Western Philosophy**

<u>Dimension</u>	<u>Chinese Philosophy</u>	<u>Western Philosophy</u>
✧ Worldview 	*Cosmological *No external ordainer *Holistic/Inclusive *Self-generating/ organismic process	*Created *Demiurge *Hebrew view/Exclusive/ Judeo-Christian *Relationship with God
✧ Time / Space 	*Whiteheadian Preference * Continuous *Synchronically *Long-term Relationship	*Newtonian Approach *Discrete Timing *Chronically *Short-Term Relationship
✧ Relations to Social Group 	*Collective *Cooperative *Family-Centered *Interdependent	*Individual *Competitive *Self-Dependent
✧ Humanity 	*Human-Heartedness *Two outlooks: Good/ Evil *Realised by Cultivating Social Virtues and Human-Heartedness	*Essence of goodness *Moral Character *Truth be Obtained by debating and arguing
✧ Integration 	* Face/Great Respect for old age *Dogmatic *Formality/High social status	*Little respect for old age *Delegation *Informality/Low social status
✧ Intolerance of Ambiguity (In terms of leadership)	*More control *Less innovation/unapproachable *Conflict undesirable	*More risk taking *More creation/Less emotional *Conflict expected

extent he also expressed that the Hebrew vision was fundamental thinking of creation. In Hebrews' view, "they came to experience themselves as the Chosen People and believe that they existed in a unique and direct relationship to the one absolute God" [46, p.95]. That is reasonably reflective of the very beginnings of Western individualism and exclusiveness of knowledge of external world [25]. On the contrary, Chinese worldview is more holistic. This can be evident that "there were always Gods but these were not deemed external, omnipotent and monotheistic in the Chinese setting" [52, p.5]. Furthermore, Chinese philosophy emphasises on inclusiveness of all different views that may be partially true (Huang 2002). An example is where there are basic differentiations between Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism; however, these philosophies all contributed the ideas and methods to create the imposing edifice of Neo-Confucianism [25]. Huang [22] claimed this synthetic attitude led to tolerance of the thoughts and behaviours of others in Chinese organisation. Moreover Koller and Koller [25] reflected that different views and practices were to be tolerated and considered sympathetically in order to appreciate and complement their values.

In addition to the basic Western view of creation, Tarnas [46] expressed that there were two significantly different aspects of the Western worldview. The one outlook is rapturously optimistic and embracing. This view considers Christianity as an already existent spiritual revolution and emphasises Christ's self-sacrifice had initiated the basic reunion of humanity and the created world with God. The other side is sternly judgmental and a dualistic pessimism which focuses on the present alienation of man and the world from God. These two perspectives are inextricably united in fact [46], however, not seen in the Western business framework. This is a big difference between Western and Chinese methodologies.

It summarises that the Chinese worldview is Cosmo logician and there exists no external ordainer [39] to generate ordered harmony. Needham and Wang [39] described that the organismic Chinese cosmos was different from classic Greek cosmology where a demiurge was necessary for existence. Whiteley [52, p.4] also noted, "Chinese view was a self-generating whole resulting in continuity of the whole and dynamism within it". Thus, in practise, from the point of view of Chinese cosmology, within business framework, workers tend to be more concerned with protecting inter-person relationships while there have conflicts in work group. These relationships are accorded by norms of humanity, which entail both rights and responsibilities for each member in organisation [11]. Wright [59] noted that this harmony would be obtained if each member of organisation were conscientious in complying with the requirements of his or her role or job. Any failure to follow that, it would endanger the relationship and disrupt the harmony of organisation [22].

Nevertheless, Judeo-Christian is a basis of the Western worldview. It claims that an ordainer external to the world exists [46] and conceived master will [38] has mediators such as priests, vicars and preachers to intercede human life and their worship [52]. As such, Tarnas [46] pointed out that the duality of soul and mind played a significant role in the West. Specifically, Whiteley, Cheung and Zhang [55] noted that the Western world was characterised by one the one had a view that the soul was God's work and on the other hand that the world was a rational and concrete place. However, in modern Western society, Huang [22] argued that the religious or moral side of human life seemed to have been neglected whilst the protestant work ethic of individualization and self-consciousness was emphasised.

## 4.2 Time and Space

Following the basic Chinese and Western worldview stated above, the elements of time-space concepts are critical to examine Chinese and Western philosophies as they are utilised in business.

In the Chinese view, Mote [38, p.24] argued “the cosmos was explained in terms of people’s awareness of their place in time and space”. Needham and Wang [39] noted that this was called the “Whiteheadian preference” where the cosmic process was a reticular relationship of events in the past and present. Yau [62] also reflected that time dimension for Chinese had two orientations: past-time and continuity. Mote [38, p.25] further claimed that “the cosmic process was one in which all stages were simultaneously present”. In support of Mote’s proposition, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner [48] suggested that the terminology of “synchronically” could be used to describe the view on “a number of things at the same time”. Thus, under these points, it is evident that each member is an active element of the process during the cyclic cosmic time in Chinese business framework and/or society. An example is where business is a part of life and once the relationship is established, it can hardly be broken in Chinese society [60]. This observation of long-term continuity come from that the relationships with past classmates, work fellows, and business partners still remain tightly as long as they are found presently. Therefore, in order to allow people stay interconnected and contribute to cosmic development, “any discrete timing must match the journey of life here and now” [52, p.6]. Consequently, in the Chinese felt, it is seen that the cosmic process deeply affects one’s life within it.

However, the Western mind is influenced by the Newtonian approach [38, 52], which explains that the universal process is a “series of causal events” in terms of business. Contrary to Chinese cosmological thinking of time concept in which there exists no “beginning point-Year one” [44], Western cosmology regards time as a process being developed chronologically around a particular event [52]. In that sense, short-term rather than long-term relationship is more emphasised by the Westerners. For instance, in the West, business relationship can be seen from beginning to end whenever business contract is valid. The weakness of this single focus relationship [1] will be lack of efficiencies of shared activities and interconnections because of Western pattern of a series of discrete events linked in a causal chain [38]. However, comparing with Chinese implicit expression of time-space concept, Western thought of chronological time framework appears to be more explicit and obvious in the business practise. An example is where the Westerners view time as a limited resource and keep a daily schedule precise. Time to them means efficiency (money) and then is carefully budgeted to achieve personal and organisational goals.

Fan [12] argued that it is in contrast to ancient Chinese mindset that looks time as a process of eternity. Whiteley [52] also indicated that this Chinese philosophy focused on quality of life that could be made natural and palatable. As of result, there has no point to keep such a rigid time schedule. For instance, in traditional Chinese society and/or business framework, people take a looser, more relaxed approach to time and regard schedules and deadlines as expressions of intent rather than obligations [13]. Ferraro [13, p.115] argued, “People from cultures with relaxed notions of time see those who deal with time very precisely as being rude because of they are willing to cut off social relationships for the sake of keeping their next appointment”. Thereby, from this point of retaining social

relationships, with little punctuality and the concept that time is plentiful, again, it is seen that Chinese people are more concerned about long-term relationship where once is established, both parties will do their best to keep their relationship by reciprocating benefits [60].

### 4.3 Good or Evil

The philosophical view on human nature orientation [26, 13] may influence managerial style and workers' correspondence to their superiors. An example is where managers who believe that human being is inherently good by nature [25] are prone to adopt the people-oriented management and the eclectic open-minded communication system [35]. While for those considering workers innately bad, they tend to use stringent task-oriented controlling and punishment system within organisation [3]. Similar to low-level workers, they may somehow adjust their work behaviour into positive or negative direction [29] simply based on how much compassion [2] their managers may express. For instance, workers are encouraged when managers are really kind, forgiving and courteous to them. In that respect, confused by a common question: human nature is good, bad or a combination of the two and dealing with how to interact within or cross level in business framework, managers and workers are to emphasise the character of innate human nature.

In the Chinese view, there have outlines of two different aspects of the human nature characteristics. The one outlook claimed that the human nature was basically good. This proposition was advocated by Mencius, a follower of Confucius, who explicitly argued that human-heartedness (jen) was basis of all human relationships and the source and foundation of all goodness and virtue [25]. Additionally, it is argued that the human perfection could be realised through cultivating human-heartedness and the social virtues. And the way to achieve the development and manifestation of human-heartedness is Propriety (Li) advanced by Confucius [15]. On the other hand, Hsun Tzu took the view that the human nature was originally evil and lacked of virtues claimed by Mencius [15]. According to Hsun Tzu, through social organisation and culture, people can become good [25]. Koller and Koller [25, p.265] further noted that in social organisation, "moral goodness was brought about as a result of the regulation of human conduct required for social living" in which mutual cooperation was emphasised. Eventually, both Mencius and Hsun Tzu considerably agreed human nature that one should practise virtues stressed by Confucius [25].

As to the Western thought of humanity, according to the depiction in Plato's dialogues, Socrates believed in moral character and the essence of goodness [55]. Whiteley, Cheung and Zhang [55] noted that he also emphasised that goodness could be and/or should be rationally moral. That benevolence in the humanity [23] makes people possess penchant for categorizing all virtuous acts, classifying their qualities, and specifying words to describe the elements of truth through dialectical analysis [55]. Following Socrates' view of goodness, Plato also reflected that "absolute truth" could be obtained by using skeptical and critical analysis.

Therefore, by examining arguments from the Chinese and Western view on innate human nature, it is observed that from Mencius was taken emphasis on utilising the correctness of actions as a means to develop humanity and from Hsun Tzu was taken emphasis on following rules of behaviour for cultivating human nature [25]. To the Westerners, however, through the process of critical questioning, arguing and debating, the goodness can be realised [55].

Nevertheless, in real business practise, several questions come out: can this explicit dichotomy of innate human nature be guides for managers to evaluate what workers really think and adjust their managerial style accordingly? What if there generate conflicts that would influence the harmony or productivity when managers and workers have different thoughts about humanity? Or in fact, good and evil can coexist in one human nature. If that is true, then will the trust between all levels be well erected by adopting both Chinese views internally (conscience-good) and externally (social rules-evil) within the Western business framework in which allow people freely debate and criticise? The answers cannot be absolute one and the questions could be remained as universal problems [26] for which both cultures must find solutions.

#### **4.4 Individualism and Collectivism**

To focus on international business issues, managers emphasise an aspect of an individual's relation to his or her social and/or work group. A number of scholars have used the dimension of individualism-collectivism as a key concept of how different philosophical value may affect workplace dynamics [20]. In the Western measures, for example, using survey research applied between 1967 and 1978 within foreign subsidiaries of IBM, Hofstede [20] emerged the model of individualism, as opposed to collectivism, to represent preference of people to belong to a loosely versus a tightly knit social framework. Latane, Williams and Harkins [77] also observed "social loafing" based on its relation to individualism-collectivism. Earley [9] further used the construct of individualism-collectivism to examine the impact of a social context on individual task performance. As for the Eastern measures, in the Chinese Value Survey [2], moral discipline-individualism was utilised to focus on keeping oneself under control in relation to others. Moreover, Fan [12] and Lockett [33] adopted "group orientation" to emphasise ties of kinship and close personal relationship when dealing with business in organisation.

In the Chinese social perception, Whiteley [52] argued that the bedrock of Chinese philosophy placed a high value on cooperation, which emphasised family centered and group interdependence. In ancient China, the family is the basic production unit [23]. Jacobs, Guopei and Herbig argued that the family organisation was a mixed blessing and ensured higher agricultural productivity through cooperation and coordination. Therefore, according to that family concept derived from ancient China, Ho [19] proposed that in the Chinese family, positive values of sharing common interests and traits [47] and non-competitiveness are stressed. An example is where purchases for individuals in a household are made with collective savings and those with wealth and power have obligations to share jobs with less fortunate relatives (Hsu 1963). In support of arguments from Whiteley [52], Ho [19], Jacobs, Guopei and Herbig [23], Koller and Koller [25] further noted that family was one immediate social environment of the child. In that sense the virtue of family can influence one's social behaviour that tends to work collectively outside of family circle [22] and have a strong sense of responsibility to the group [13]. For example, people in Chinese collectivistic society spend a lot of time encouraging children to engage in cooperative activities that benefit their earlier success [10] and take many obligations to others.

As a result of the Chinese time concept, based on its long-term continuity [60], Triandis [47] argued that in the Chinese collectivistic society, in-groups often extend inclusion from family members to distant relatives, schoolmates, co-workers and members of political and religious groups. This proponent of group interdependence is supported by the results obtained by Wilson [56] in his study of Taiwan [33]. Ferraro [13] also reflected that the Chinese (Taiwan)

culture encouraged people to place the interest of the group above their own, maintain strong ties and obligations to group members and value long-term social relationships above short-term accomplishments [24, 20].

By contrast, the Western philosophy values competitiveness, which focuses on individualism and self-dependence [76; 53]. Following the virtue of the Socrates' philosophical search conceptualized by individualistic and skeptical behaviour, Whiteley, Cheung and Zhang [55] also argued that central value of the Western philosophical thought was selfhood, self-control, self-awareness and self-reflection. An example is where the Westerners such as the United States, Canada and England emphasise autonomy, independence and the worth and dignity of individual over the group [13].

Compared by the Chinese culture, family ties tend to be relatively unimportant for the West [13]. An example is where the Westerners divide their time between family and social groupings, including church, labor union and a host of voluntary organisation. Regarding parental attitude, inside the Western family, parents place more emphasis on the child's expression of opinions, independence, creativity and personal development. For example, in the Western family, parents allow the children to participate in adult conversation and encourage them to compete with other children [19]. This is in contrast to the Chinese parental attitude that focuses on strictness of discipline and proper behaviour, which are correlated with Confucian Five Cardinal Relations [15].

#### **4.5 Femininity and Masculinity**

The philosophical concept of how to value success and in what way workers think about their life in related to the work is a crucial element for managers to motivate them within organisation. Several scholars have differentiated this philosophical thought by a number of different terms pertaining to "the extent to which a culture prefers achievement, assertiveness, power, competition, and material possessions versus nurturing, social relationships, and cooperation" [13, p.107].

For instance, Hofstede [20] used the terms "masculine" and "feminine" to distinguish this value. Mead [64], Condon and Yousef [65] and Brake and colleagues [1] recognised the tough-tender dimension that includes different levels of competition. In support of the tough-tender dimension, Parsons and Shils [66], McClelland [67] and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner [48] also added elements of the "ascribed" and "achieved" distinction into the model. The terms "doing" and "being" were also used to value the dichotomy between emphasis on completing tasks and emphasis on social relationships [26].

In view of Chinese philosophical thought of relationship orientation [20], Chinese people are tenderer in society and tend to define "success" in terms of good *quanxi* [68, 71, 72]. For example, within workplace, workers emphasise affiliation, character, personal nurturing, quality of life [52], and maintenance of social relationships [60, 13]. That is in contrast to the Western thought of "success" in terms of material accumulations and well-rewarded jobs. An example is where the Westerners place value on doing and achieving measurable goals [13] and mainly concerning with self-efficacy [10].

Regarding Chinese Mindset, Fan [12, p.18] argued, "Chinese minds were akin to femininity in many respects".

An example is where Chinese people may solve problems by using more synthetic, intuitive and integrated ways. On the contrary, the Western logic tends to be masculinity where have analytical, linear, orderly, and explicit substances while approaching problems. An example is where the Westerners always first identify problems and then implement and control the available feasible options with explicit plan and schedule.

#### **4.6 Equality and Hierarchy**

For members within society or business framework, a question is always raised to argue: With different levels of power or status, how should people interact with one another? Different philosophical views would have various answers for that. In respond to this argument, the measure of an indicator of degree of centralisation was developed. For instance, Hofstede [20] focused on “power distance” dimension to identify the appropriate degree of power distance between a manager and a worker. Bond [2] proposed the term “integration” to represent the extent of social stability and tolerance for others. This “integration” also places importance on being trustworthy and enjoying a close friendship. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner [48] used a series of triangles illustrating various levels of social distance. By equality-hierarchy dimension, Ferraro [13] further observed the degree of informal relations between people of high and low status. He claimed that there was a high level of delegation of authority in egalitarian oriented society.

In ancient China history, the long existence of the centralized monarchy has generated strong sense of order and relationship [23]. Bond and Hwang [75] noted that, in the Confucian view, Wu-Lun (Five Cardinal Relations), namely, those between sovereign and subject, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend, were accorded a position of paramount importance. In order to maintain this established social order, Confucianism advocated propriety (Li) as a basic doctrine that every member in society should behave according to rank [23]. As of result, social harmony is achieved. In support of that argument, Fairbank [11] claimed these relationships, even those between friends, were constructed in hierarchical form by the order of nature itself.

Compared with hierarchy in Chinese society, informality is emphasised in the West, especially in the United States. There has little social distance between the various levels of society [13]. An example is where Western managers can be questioned and power can be diffused to many people with low-status differences.

Because of rank-oriented influence, “Face” is a central importance for interpersonal relations among Chinese [70]. Lockett [33] argued that each class in Chinese society has a different “face”. He claimed that is because “face” is essentially the recognition by others of one’s social standings and position. Wu and Yong [60] also argued that, based on the Confucius virtue of respect, someone with authority, often elderly and with a good reputation can ask for favours of others or enjoy special prestige. That leads to a need to order relationships by status and to respect the order of the status. For example, in traditional Chinese business framework, workers are reluctant to present ideas since they have to maintain managers’ “face”. If workers have to share ideas that may lead to business improvement, they would rather give this credit to senior workers or managers. That is in contrast to the Western society where has little respect for senior people [13]. This particular pattern of hierarchical socialisation has been supported by Lu [34], Hu [69] and Wilson [56]. Moreover, Redding and Ng[41], Wilson and Pusey [58], Lindsay and Dempsey [31], Duan and Huang [8] found that “face” was important to a Chinese manager than to a Western one as well as being recognised by

others was relatively important than in the West [33].

#### **4.7 Uncertainty avoidance**

According to Hofstede [20], “uncertainty avoidance refers to the lack of tolerance for ambiguity and the need for formal rules and high-level organization structure” [13, p. 111]. Wilson and Dalton [57] used the terms “dynamic” and “stable” to contrast distinction in these philosophical differences. Brake and colleagues [1] used the dichotomy of “order” and “flexibility” to discuss these significant components in the model.

There is no definitive answer for which philosophical value is more tolerant of ambiguity. In the finding of Hofstede [20], the Western people (The United States) were slightly higher than the Chinese people (Hong Kong) in uncertainty avoidance. As a result of the study [7], however, it was found that U.S managers were more tolerant of ambiguity than their Hong Kong counterparts. Nevertheless, in terms of “leadership” [13] or “power distance” [20], it is found that Chinese business framework with more control or power distance has higher level of uncertainty avoidance than the West.

### **5. Discussion**

In examining an argument of “Western approach will present no problems for Chinese structure”, this study does not attempt to make comparisons among the three cases but to discover philosophical value in response to the interaction between managers and workers within different settings and then explore which value is applicable to the organisation. Eventually, despite case A is Western structure where has Western value and emphasis on scientific management [45], it is somehow observed that majority of workers actually living within all three cases are Chinese people. In that sense Chinese philosophy is the key to influence the interaction. Consequently, in order to apply Western approach to the Chinese structure, the alignment between the chosen Western philosophy and Chinese organisation is essential. However, either in Western or Chinese structure as shown in the findings, apparently there lacks alignment between what they are saying (value and strategy) and what they are doing (structure and system). When organisations do not match that theory of alignment [53], there would have organisational conflicts existing inside so-called Westernised structure [22], not to mention purely Chinese structure. Through the findings, several features in relation to Chinese Philosophy are discussed.

#### **5.1 Relationship**

One of the findings shows “continuous relationship” is paramount importance no matter where is in Chinese or Western setting with Chinese workers. This finding is supported by the propositions argued by Tu [49], Mote [38], Yau [62], Wu and Yong [60] and Whiteley [52].

As the Chinese worldview depicted in this study, “family circle” [22] is a basis where can be extended to co-workers and managers. From the observation, even within one Chinese work group, different family circles can be formed based on whether they have same characteristics of background, work relationship, value concept, image on each other, religion, education and other shared experience [73, 74]. In their own family circles, resource and information are collectively shared. In support of this proposition, based on case A scenario, apparently middle manager is not family member of executive vice president and therefore obtains less resource than other in-group

members. Furthermore, case B shows branch manager grants favorable appraisal result to the person having poor performance simply because he is a member of family circle. In spite of arguing and debating with management, workers tend to protect long-term relationship with harmony and tolerate such situation by using passive and informal communication. Furthermore, interestingly, this study finds that executive vice president in case A always give favors to in-group members, however she is close-minded to those in outside family by strictly enforcing scientific management without considering human being is emotional and autonomous. Again, that supports the importance of “relationship”.

In view of this relationship-oriented interaction, “trust” is the key. Chinese people value “trust” based on relationship [8]. With such “trust” relationship, it is expected that there will be reciprocity with one favour repaid by another. Moreover, this trust relationship can be referred to “connection” [33] or “guanxi” [60] that is critical to social life at work. The use of guanxi to obtain wanted recourse is endemic within Chinese structure. And the cultivation of guanxi [28] is cited as the reason why those members within family circle are so successful. The report of Saner-Yui and Saner-Yui [42] reflected the prevalence of relationship-oriented as opposed to performance-oriented evaluation in Taiwan. Thus, this is consistent with the finding in case B. Accordingly, long-term social relationship is emphasised.

## **5.2 Collectivism**

Following the concept of “family circle”, Chinese people work collectively. Within family circle, members place group-interest above self-interest and will pursue group goal. This can be supported by Ho [19], Triandis [47] and Jacob, Guppei and Herbig [23]. However, through the findings, it is also seen that there have conflicts between different family circles when competition for limited resource. Therefore, in terms of “in-group”, it is reflected that there has a phenomenon that “work collectively in group” but “compete with out group as individual way”.

Although there have many authors who have already differentiated values between individual-oriented and collective-oriented frameworks [13], a question of to what degree should people pursue their self-interest [10] rather than contributing to the welfare of the larger in-group [18, 40, 47, 50, 10] will be asked by both Western and Chinese managers. The answer may be varied depending on how importantly their philosophy value individualism and collectivism respectively in the social system.

## **5.3 Power distance and Face**

The findings in case A and B show that the sense of hierarchy is strong in the traditional Chinese management, which is supported by Fairbank [11], Bond and Hwang [75] and Jacob, Guopei and Herbig [23]. The findings are also supported by Laaksonen’s [27] research in the P.R.C. that showed a higher power distance between top management and workers. That power distance [20] often disrupts the harmony of participation that is essential to the progress of the business framework [23].

Because of dogmatic trait of Chinese managers and paternalistic system, it is also discovered that workers are hesitated to present ideas that may lead to operation streamline and business improvement such as in case A and B. In

that sense the decision making process is not opened to low-level workers or even mid-level supervisors, especially when encountering issues regarding daily practices that go against accepted practices or contradict its own assumptions and beliefs [22]. Workers tend to be discouraged from independent, active or even creative activities. That leads into innovation seemingly not necessary and then might influence productivity.

“Face” is important in social interaction. This can be seen in case C where the president respects for the age because of not let him feel “loss of face”. In support of this finding, Wu and Yong [60] reflected that Chinese philosophical value such as face is closely related to the creation and development of business network. Wilson [56], Redding and Ng [41], Wilson and Pusey [58], Lindsay and Dempsey [31], Duan and Huang [8] and Jacob, Guopei and Herbig [23] also observed that loss of face was an important element in the interpersonal relations in Chinese organisation. Consequently, The loss of face occurs when group expectations are not met [23]. Losing “face” will lead to dire social consequences in Chinese society.

#### **5.4 Summary**

In Chinese structure or even within Western structure with Chinese members, Chinese character is inherently embedded in Chinese managers and workers. Hierarchy, guanxi and face are central elements to cultivate socialization in Chinese work group. The tradition of these Chinese characteristics provides an ordered collectivity that is harmonious. The extended family is important in Chinese society. Within the family, resource can be shared and group goal can be achieved. In the mean time, it is seen that the authority and decisions of managers cannot be questioned. As of result, the dogmatism of Chinese managers sometimes hinders business innovation and restricts growth in terms of size and globalisation.

The scientific principles used by Western structure are contributed to enhance their productivity and encourage workers by economic reward. Promotion and performance are achieved by the element of competition. It values that the human is controllable as long as economic reward is given. Within Western structure, it might have high efficiency in terms of human resource, operation flow, sales process and even decision making. That systematic structure is moving mechanically and shows little acceptance of the affective needs of employees. It somehow also ignores the basic nature of harmonious environment, reciprocity and long-term relationship.

#### **6. Conclusion and Theory Emerged**

In response to an argument of “Western approach will present no problems for Chinese structure”, this study emerges a rule that synthesis of Western and Chinese value is applicable to both business and people. Specifically, adopting scientific management based on considerate Chinese characteristics of respecting for the age, maintaining “face” in the public and emphasising long-term social relationship (even between family circles) is the key to successfully implement that emerged rule. Ideally, reasonable Western performance competition with more compassion within Chinese structure may be attractive to workers and gain the loyalty. Practically, even within foreign-held company, in order to construct harmonious and efficient work place, the key to effective business operation is that managers need to adjust their own Chinese characters toward more open-minded and turn into high receptivity of different ways of doing business through respecting for each other according to the rank and reciprocity. The effectiveness of managers’ adjustment may be varied according to whether their mind is much inherently rooted

traditional Chinese characteristics, whether their belief of human nature is innately good or whether their education or training has Western influence. The following framework is emerged to construct work environment where the Western approach is applicable to the Chinese (Taiwan) structure.

### **6.1 Philosophy-Tolerant, Collective, Economic, Pioneering**

It indicates that human at work is somewhat respectfully repressible. Workers like to form a group where they share their own personal feeling about expectation and value concept for the job assigned. In a group, social interaction is very critical to evaluate inter-person skills and be accepted to the counter-group. The faction may exist if there have arguments both in job and personal life concept. The goal of human work can be achieved by monetary rewards and back-end support with recognition. And human at work is characterized as owning a pioneering spirit when there have new assignments they like to try. They can forges ever onward to obtain an optimum economic contribution as long as they are admired and respected between parties. The approach taken here needs a combined way of Chinese value and Western philosophical thinking as well as adds Taiwanese adventure spirit into the model.

### **6.2 Assumption- Harmony, Variety, Efficiency, Reward**

It will create an environment with conformity. In that environment, every member respects for each other. Under that respectful situation, workers can tolerate arguments and debating on daily routines works and dominant sales demand from managers. It will also establish a learning environment where workers can share feeling and expectation with mid-level managers and the top management. The communication is efficiently smooth and educated. The variety of job function will be erected for works so as to let them perform pioneering spirit and achieve goal. Compensation program should be flexible and various for positive competition.

### **6.3 Theory of Control with Harmony and Reciprocity**

It indicates that workers are willing to be dominated by the authorisation only when they are respected, which means “give them face” and “don’t humiliate them in the public”. As long as this management concept is erected, organizational learning and motivation to share experiences can be exercised effectively with mutual benefits under scientific management system.

### **6.4 Organising- Open, Two-Way, Sharing, Socialised**

In the structure, the supervision is open. Each member has equal status. Function title is the only differentiation. In that sense all workers should work as a group. Brain storming with related functions of workers is performed while making decisions. The expectation and ideas from the workers are emphasized and translated by their direct managers to the Top. And through two-way communication, considering all aspects of task and business daily issues effectively can solve the problem. The social interaction between managers and workers are essential to improve status relationship. The information and comments will be shared through an informal and casual meeting. In the system, since workers will receive respect on the job or daily life, stringent control and performance-tracking strategy will be accepted to push them to achieve goal. Compensation plan will be established based on both financial plan and workers’ expectation. In order to enhance innovation, job transfer system will be constructed for pursuing high

productivity. In the process, managers and workers will do performance evaluation mutually. Managers understand issues through coaching as well as workers contribute feedbacks to managers.

## 6.5 Practices- Essential Partner, Take Ownership

If alignment in this emerged theory is realised, workers may follow instructions and will be treated as joint partners in terms of “take ownership” inside the business organisations. Each of workers is essential and is cared by each other within the structure. Family centred is the basis of shareholder value.

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