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Connatural Management approach to preparation and development of individuals in the business environment

Key words: *management, business, environment*

Introduction

The aim of this article is to introduce the concept of Connatural Management Approach (CNM) and its potential for quality development of an individual in relation to management of organizations and processes as well as management of people and human systems. This approach has been developed at Newton College in Brno, where the need has arisen to search for other ways of skills development of professionals who are expected to effectively realize their potential and keep developing under the dynamically changing conditions of the market environment.

Current approaches to description of human skills of working within organizational environment vary and take different views into account. The overwhelming majority, however, only distinguishes between hard and soft skills (For example Plamínek (2004, 2005) within the context of soft skills development draws attention to managing oneself as well as managing people, teams and companies). These approaches describe what organizational environment requires from humans, they emphasize performance or decision-making processes, or search for an optimal environment for the identified competencies or skills of an individual to be applied (For example Armstrong (2007), Šuleř (2008), Koubek (2008), Fol-

warcná (2010) and others). In terms of training professionals for the business environment, it becomes clear that in addition to these two traditional factors of development, it is useful to focus on what we started to call subtle skills (By subtle skills we understand fine understanding of situations or context and mental acuteness – qualities not to be noticed or analyzed immediately, which however created “added” value of an individual and their orientation and functioning within the particular situational context). The present CNM model focuses on methods of developing these fine skills and natural talents of each individual, which enable them to effectively realize their potential in the unceasingly changing world.

The reversible process directed to oneself emphasizing individualism and individuation is a very significant pattern of our thought process (We use the term of individuation in the sense of: „a long-term process in which a man becomes an individual“, (New academic dictionary of loanwords, 2007) that is a different person (in our concept in terms of mind and cognition in particular) from other individuals of the same class and kind. From the perspective of psychological approaches we understand process from the perspective of C. G. Jung's concept of psychology. The term individuation can be understood in the context of autopoiesis as a conscious autopoiesis of a mind and a man, which is the basis of cognitive management concept). Nordstrom, K. and Ridderstrale, J. (2006) note in the book titled *Karaoke Capitalism: Daring to Be Different in a Copycat World* that when one wants to “move forward“, they must follow their individual, internal path, path of imagination and authenticity. Imitating, following the rules, regulations and algorithms, etc. create a sense of security. Such behaviour is, however, predictable and can be expected [More in Saliger, Pokorný, Pindešová. (Cognitive management, 2010)].

We therefore consider the concept of P. M. Senge (2007) inspiring. In it, he formulates five basic areas, or disciplines, which he applies to any human system in terms of the ability to survive and develop in a changing environment. By disciplines he means personal mastery (professionalism), mental models (fluctuant and critical thinking), vision sharing (communication - dialogue), team learning, and the fifth, final discipline, systemic thinking (the ability to view systems as wholes). Personal mastery is based on competence and professional skills, but it

also presents further development potential, i.e. lifelong discipline. People who have reached personal mastery are aware of their own “ignorance, incapacities and areas they need to work on. They are very self-confident at the same time.” The awareness of one’s own incompetence on one hand, and self-confidence on the other might seem a paradox, but it is actually a force that is permanently driving one to improve. This paradox is also what makes one different from an expert as described by N. N. Taleb (2011). The issue of personal, i.e. professional mastery is further elaborated upon within the framework of Cognitive Management (For more, see Concept of Professionalism (Saliger, Pokorný, Pindešová, 2010). Similar questions are also addressed by Pink (2011, p. 90) who points out three laws of mastery (Three laws of mastery according to D. Pink: 1. Mastery is a way of thinking (Pink describes a behavioral view of Carol Dweck according to whom people’s beliefs predetermine their achievements); 2. Mastery is pain (based on army officers’ training experience); 3. Mastery is asymptote (it shows mastery is not finite, one can approach it, but never achieve it completely). in the context of motivation. Even though he draws from results of behavioural research, he emphasizes autonomy and connaturality. *“The point is not keeping our natural predisposition hidden, but on the very contrary – revealing it”* [Pink, 2011: 67].

Connatural management

Connatural Management (CNM) can be simply defined as being natural and spontaneous. The term as such covers two aspects:

1. Management by nature, meaning managing connatural qualities of people and human systems;
2. Management by nature, meaning cultivating the ability to distinguish between the natural and the artificial as well as respecting natural conditions and effects of situations, environments and human and organizational potential.

One of the aspects of CNM is individual skills development for an effective action in the cognitive domain. The cognitive domain applies to thinking as well as information and experience processing. Knowledge is “created” in this domain and knowledge eventually leads to any decision. Decision itself is, however, only one stage of the process. A decision has the form of information and knowledge which make sense within a particular context (Context within the meaning of

'spinning' (Latin con-texo = intertwine). As a behavioural pattern decision actually co-creates reality. This is based on coherence and correspondence, that is on unity of references and integrity of context. A decision can be rational, sensible, wise or unwise.

The terms rationality, sensibility, and wisdom are considered as follows:

1. We understand the ability to logically consider information and knowledge in the framework of a given cognitive model as rationality.

2. We understand two main qualities of a thinking process in particular, that is volatility within the cognitive continuum as per K. R. Hammond [in Kostroń, p. 47 – 66], and the ability of system thinking in the context of thoughts of P. M. Senge (2007, p. 24) as reasonableness. It is the ability to act mentally in two directions or modes. This is mainly based on the ability to differentiate, i.e. to separate, distinguish, categorize, and work with particularities or components. The second mode is geared towards relationships, relations, similarity, reciprocity, context, and the whole. These are the aspects, for which the traditional critical thinking reduction to formal logic operations, seems to be insufficient.

3. We understand the aspect of personal mastery according to P. M. Senge (2007) as wisdom and we suggest the following thought of Z. Neubauer as a relevant illustration of the term: *"Just by listening to the sound of the word - wisdom - how natural (although certainly not common), we hear the same; experienced reasonableness and understanding, truthfulness indifferent to disputes, justice of conciliation, not judging but goodness, in which the opposites meet. "Wise is not a man who is well-educated, who knows a lot, but one who understands even completely opposite attitudes to his own. He can simply 'absorb' them and relate to them. Wisdom includes openness, represents perceptiveness, provides space for understanding. When I come to a wise man for advice, I do not expect only his opinion on my problem, or instructions or a lecture; I mainly seek the opportunity for counsel - to know how to deal with myself. I know that in the vicinity of a wise man I can find the capacity within me, to see my own situation and view myself from its perspective. Perspective of wisdom is the distance from what worries and burdens me, space to retreat out of an impasse. We touched upon this already at the beginning, in the context of acquiring skills related to the art of communicating them to the others - less gifted and apt - or on the contrary more gifted and more apt. If it wasn't for wisdom, there would be no development and no growth of experience in this world:*

information would be merely twisted and lost, like in a game of Chinese whispers.
 "Neubauer (2002, p. 135-136).

It is fundamental for a decision, how it is understood, how it is grasped and subsequently implemented in the physical domain, so an important element is the way the decision is shared as knowledge (information) and applied to a specific context. Various models and metaphors make understanding cognitive processes, thinking, decision-making and knowledge inception and sharing accessible. One of the current models is the model using cybernetics language. Hardware and software are good examples (For more see for example [Neubauer, 2002: 102]). The background of the so-called soft skills or skills necessary for cooperation with people, knowledge sharing, and human systems managing suggests itself. This mechanistic model surely allows for some categorization of reality and its understanding in the current post-modern paradigm. In the background of this model we can sense the traditional differentiation between the tangible and the intangible, body and soul or the physical and the metaphysical. There are however other models, the principles of which may currently be applied. A Taoist concept presented not only by Lao-Ć, but mainly by Sun-Ć and Zhuang Zhou is similar in terms of its application potential.

The mechanistic hard/soft model, aptly adopted from cybernetics, is obviously not sufficient to describe all the aspects of developing a manager. There is a lot of specific individual skills and knowledge necessary to react flexibly within a particular context to be taken into account. Neubauer, when considering the subjectivity and autonomy in conjunction with the mechanistic concept notes: *"real 'cyberneticists' know that what they express by their works, had to be understood in its entirety first and grasped within sense. They know it is necessary to stand in the centre of the core of a given problem, and be a master of expressing this unifying intuition and that software cannot be developed and tweaked by a simple trial-and-error method, or mechanistic relocation of structural 'blocks'". "Meanwhile, they do not worry whether or not thinking specifies its laws to matter, or whether or not thinking is an expression of laws of the matter, but they implement the reciprocity of software and hardware for each piece of installed equipment over again. And they realize that the separation of both sides (soft and hard-) is on the one hand the very source of their technical success, at the same time, however, that it represents the biggest obstacle in the imitation of natural beings, i.e.*

living beings, cells, organisms, brain. Self-managing (self-regulation) of living entities lies in what we called with Hofstadter "wetware". The boundary between the program, the installation device and the output is smooth and the proportion of the two sides is self-regulated too. In these considerations we want to see the living unity of thoughts and life, which the living beings represent via the current experience. It is important to realize that the default experience, "I think, therefore I am" is not an exclusive exercise of a human spirit, wholly adventitious to nature, as Descart's basis of modern age science has been reassuring us for centuries, but a physical performance of any living matter as such. [Neubauer, 2002: 92].

Given the assumption that organizations are human systems, and as such, because they consist of human beings, they are alive in a way too, the above mentioned way of thinking appears to be inspiring to the extent that it allows us to create a model which may contribute to an effective development of human skills and human systems. Human knowledge development and the unceasingly changing social and market environment require such a model more and more urgently. The hard/soft model has its advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages is that it creates "people" for the existing systems and familiar environments, usually with the characteristics typical for the environment of the second wave as per A. Toffler. One of the disadvantages is that it does not allow any significant quality development of systems and environments of the third wave.

Besides the traditional hard and soft skills, the connatural management approach also presents the so-called subtle skills. These are inherent to every individual; they might even have been genetically encoded. In our environment subtle skills are suppressed by social development of society as well as the "usual" model of management decision making, and it is therefore difficult to apply them. Sensitive perception of feelings and intuition can be the key to managerial success in the present, highly competitive, business environment. Similar thoughts can be found in F. Hroník (2008), who highlights the need to search for a „*solid point in oneself*“, i.e. managerial integrity as a necessary tool of every individual operating within managerial environment.

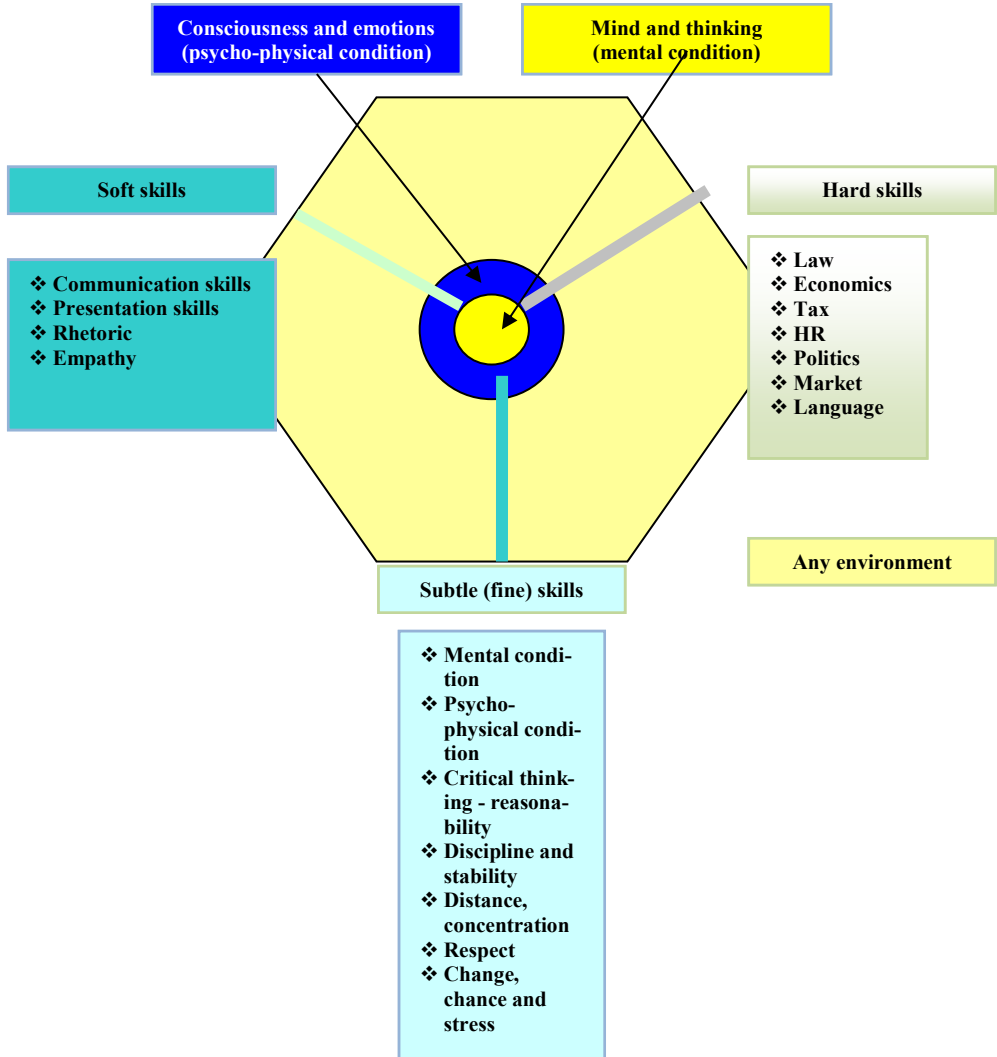
CNM focuses on qualities which are to a certain extent inherent to all people, therefore also organizational human systems. These qualities are also included in all possible situation contexts in which people can find themselves. In other

words, they are inherent to any context, and may apply anywhere and anytime. These are not properties and capacities as described by psychologists, sociologists or structured and categorized by philosophers. They are closely related to what is called tacit or implicit skills; what Dreyfus brothers would call non-rationalized practice; what is related to the flow effect aspects as per Csikszentmihalyi; personal mastery according to P. M. Senge or the approach of a master as depicted in a story by Zhuang Zhou in the chapter "Principles of growing life". *"Master chef was opening the bull for prince Wenhui. Every swing of his hand, each stretch of his arm, each step of his feet, each bend of his knee, each ring and turn of the blade piercing through created something like a desirable tone in a piece of music, which in its harmony far exceeded the dance of a Mulberry orchard or the famous choir of Leader Ordaining.*

Within the CNM model we have called these inherent qualities which can influence management and cultivation 'subtle skills'. They are based on the natural potential of a man, on the ability to step outside of the usual schemes of knowledge, models of thinking, behaviour and decision-making standards. In this sense CNM focuses on the way of thinking similar to the one described by Zhuang Zhou.

The following scheme presents a three dimensional model of managerial skills and individual skills within them. The basis of the model consists of three dimensions of skills - hard skills: professional and system skills; soft skills: interpersonal skills; and subtle skills: individual skills (fine and implicit).

Figure 1: Three dimensional model of Connatural Management approach



Source: own

We perceive as subtle skills the natural abilities of an individual, which are applied to decision making and behaviour in changing situational contexts.

- Mental condition relates to cognitive and decision making optimum.
- Psycho-physical condition relates to the balance and harmony of the inner systems of an individual.
- Critical thinking - reasonability. In terms of subtle skill this does not represent and cannot be confused with analytical thinking and logical judgements. It exceeds, or rather includes, these aspects. Mobility within the cognitive continuum also requires feelings and intuition. Critical thinking (krinó - I judge) is excluded from the practical application of the usual context of formal logic methods in order to be able to apply it not only to linear problems, but also to heuristics or problems requiring decision making under uncertainty, permanent changes or under the influence of stochastic processes, etc.
- Discipline and stability are related to the states of mind functions. Stability applies to the ability of avoiding extremes, i.e. moving within the optimal continuum of critical thinking. Discipline is related to the fact that I am aware of the subject of my consciousness and therefore also of what I think and how I think. This allows one to "discipline" and control one's train of thought.
- Distance and concentration relate to the ability of following particular subject matter; pursuing particular intention in the context of vision and situation. The ability to work with a gap, stereotypes, and subject-object reactive status is also relevant to this.
- Respect represents the ability of a fully responsible relationship to oneself, a team, a company, an environment.
- Change, chance and stress represent the ability to consider change a permanent aspect of being, and related effects of parallel processes, accidents, loads - stress and crisis.

To us high quality training of future managers means constant dedication to developing various methods and approaches which we actively apply to the process of preparing and educating them. The value created by this process has three different levels. The first level is the basic level of knowledge. The second level is

about skills. The subject (the value) of the highest level is a long-term conscious self-development and cultivation of tacit knowledge and meta-abilities (Meta-abilities indicate "continuous attention and more conscious practical application of our attitudes" Mindell (2009, p 12). The use of various techniques, such as effective management and administration of people and human systems, may be in the case of various managers significantly affected by meta-abilities, which ultimately determine the quality of their work) that increase one's competence to operate in various circumstances, i.e. subtle skills. The hard and soft skills development takes place within the first two levels of the education process and subtle skills development is the third way to achieve managerial mastery. Anthropologist Edward Hall states that "people are learning organisms par excellence. Their desire to learn is as strong as sexual desire - but it wakes much earlier and dies much later" (More in Senge (2007, p. 31). To wake up the desire, this hunger for learning, the urge for self-development and at the same time to offer the environment, approaches, and ways to achieve set goals is the ultimate target of our endeavour.

At Newton College we apply the CNM approach within the framework of special courses and training beyond the credit curriculum. Using our methods, we try to stimulate resources, potentials and simply everything that may lead to changes. True learning is not about absorbing information. It is a process of recreating ourselves.

One of the currently offered products is management training called "**x-tream management**". This training combines elements of crisis, project, and cognitive management with a special emphasis on the CNM approach. It focuses on development of three levels, three areas of competence:

- Taking care of oneself (self-control – managing stress and related emotions – preventing being a burden to the team / personal professional competence);
- Taking care of the immediate environment (partner, the team/professional and team competence/);
- Taking care of a broader reference environment (the company - professional and managerial competence).

The training has elements of a development centre and it is geared towards individual and pro-team skills which are crucial for further development of decision making and reacting skills to manage standard, challenging, extra-ordinary and extreme situations. Methods of intuition development, critical thinking, concentration, relaxation, etc., are used in the training. The training program allows participants to creatively and usefully apply their own experience and knowledge in a specifically modelled environment. Besides the reflexion method, complex diagnostics of mental and psycho-physical condition of each participant is also part of the training.

Conclusion

In the article we have introduced the basic ideas of the Connatural Management approach (CNM) which focuses in particular on the development of subtle skills, or natural potentials and skills, which are inherent to everybody. As Newton College teachers one of our objectives is to be proactive in preparing professional managers for their future careers. This means constant monitoring of the business environment; i.e. what is currently required from a manager. It becomes clear that it is necessary to develop not only hard and soft skills, but also subtle skills, as tools to achieve managerial mastery. We consider the CNM approach very effective and useful in terms of responding to this need.

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Summary

The aim of this article is to introduce the concept of Connatural Management Approach (CNM) and its potential for quality development of an individual in relation to management of organizations and processes as well as management of people and human systems. This approach has been developed at Newton College in Brno, where the need has arisen to search for other ways of skills development of professionals who are expected to effectively realize their potential and keep developing under the dynamically changing conditions of the market environment.