



KIT | Intercultural Professionals

Business Leadership in China

Dr. Wendong Deng

February 18, 2016



KIT

Royal Tropical Institute
Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen

KIT was founded in 1910 as the 'Colonial Institute' to study the tropics and to promote trade and industry in the (at that time) colonial territories of the Netherlands.

Nowadays, KIT is a not-for-profit knowledge and expertise organization for international and intercultural cooperation.

The Key Issue



KIT | Intercultural Professionals



A Typical Situation

“Some process needs to be improved. As you are the expert in China, you can accomplish this task by your own. If you have any question, I am available. We should see some outcome in two weeks.”



“I should not make any mistake and ask stupid questions in front of my new boss!”



“Is he too weak to understand how to do this himself?”



“Is he a lazy leader who just wants me to do his job?”



What if the leader is a Chinese ?



As a international leader, you should know:

- There are **cultural differences** between China and the West.
- The way followers **view** their leaders, what they **expect** from their leaders, and what leaders can **expect** from their team members.
- The leadership must have a “**cultural fit**” between leaders and subordinates from diverse backgrounds.



Leadership & Chinese Culture



KIT | Intercultural Professionals



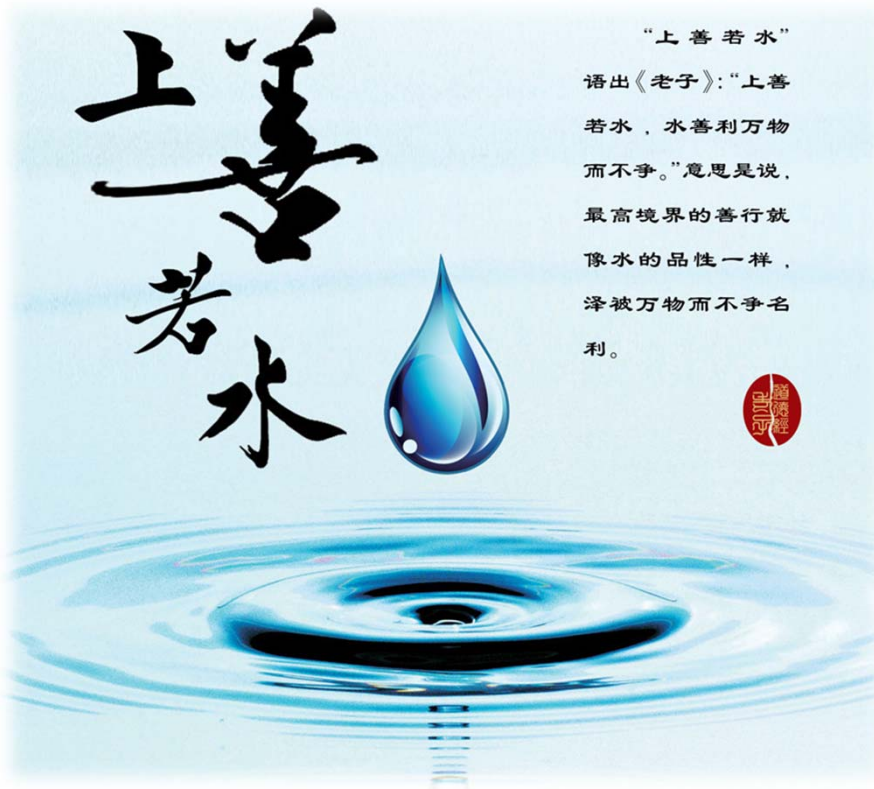
Major Ideological Foundations of Chinese leadership

- Confucianism
- Taoism
- Sun Tzu
- Guanxi
- Communism



Leaders in School!





“上善若水”
语出《老子》：“上善
若水，水善利万物
而不争。”意思是说，
最高境界的善行就
像水的品性一样，
泽被万物而不争名
利。

The Metaphor of Water:

- In the lowest position
- Not compete
- Helpful and beneficial to all things
- Strength of softness
- Involve flexibility and adaptability

The best human qualities reflect the properties of water.

Chapter 8, Tao Te Ching



Water-like Leadership Style

- **Altruistic:** selflessness as an essential attribute of a leader.
- **Modest:** “He/she who knows how to motivate people acts humble.” (Chapter 68)
- **Flexible:** good leaders can adjust themselves to any environment and situation just as water does to a container.
- **Transparent:** effective leaders should be honest and transparent to their followers.
- **Gentle but persistent:** tolerate all kinds of environments, gathering strength without wearing it off at an earlier stage.



Exemplar Chinese Business Leader



Zhang Ruimin
CEO of Haier Group



The New Generation...

The new values of young employees, born after 1980, are:

Individualistic

The younger generation endorses more individualism and less collectivism and Confucianism than the older generations (McEwen et al., 2006)

Egalitarian

Hierarchy and power distance are heritage of the traditional value of submission to authority, which has been gradually weakened over time.

Materialistic

71% of the Chinese measure success by their accumulated wealth. Swedish: 7%; Europeans: 20%; global average: 34% (Duff & Gottfried, 2013).





The New Generation...

The new values of young employees, born after 1980, are driving the need for leaders to adjust their leadership practices once again:



Authoritarian and controlling style

Participative or empowering leadership





Summary

Chinese leadership is different from that of the West. This distinction emerges from long-standing ideological and cultural orientations.

However, three Caveats:

- Not all Chinese leaders are alike.
- There is no one leadership stereotype in modern China.
- Cultural foundations are dynamic as China evolves socially in parallel with the dramatic pace of its economic growth.

Stay in touch
&
follow us!



@KITGLOBAL

W.DENG@KIT.NL

Thank you!