Establishing a Shared Vision Based on Moral Purpose in Beijing Business Management Institute

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Abstract

I have deep feelings for Beijing Business Management Institute (BBMI), where I worked for 19 years. After the Education Reform in 2000 in China, BBMI experienced many difficulties concerning leadership and management. In my personal opinion, the root reason for these difficulties came from the lack of a shared vision based on moral purpose. Therefore, in order to help BBMI move out of this present difficult situation, I analyzed BBMI’s problems, referred two relevant models and designed a unique method of a shared vision process from which I hope BBMI leaders will find instructive and helpful.
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Chapter 1  Introduction

Purpose of Study

I obtained my bachelor degree and then began my career in the Beijing Business Management Institute (BBMI) in 1995. During the past nearly 20 years, I changed my position several times, from a professional teacher in the International Trade Department, an administrative clerk in the Personnel Division, a deputy division-chief in the Institute Office to a division-chief in the Overseas Training Department. In these various roles, I witnessed many crucial moments that BBMI encountered as a public-sector organization during its development process.

A remarkable transformation happened in China during these same 20 years. Rapid economic growth, large quantities of modern and convenient infrastructure enhancements, and abundant consumer products made Chinese people’s material lives much better. At the same time, various kinds of reforms were implemented to help move the whole country forward, one of which was a series of Education Reforms. These reforms, impacted BBMI profoundly.

One of the Education Reforms carried out by the State Council of China in 2000 brought BBMI great challenges. BBMI could not enroll college students anymore and had to become a training center for its superior department--All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives (ACFSMC) (State Bulletin, 2000). This was a significant change for BBMI. Every BBMI employee had to adjust his or her steps to be compliant with the change. The leaders in BBMI also made great
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efforts to confront these challenges, but it was a pity that these efforts were not so fruitful. I was interested in understanding the reasons why BBMI could not create a new situation since 2000 and why almost everyone in BBMI had complaints about the changes.

In this paper, I will analyze the problems and difficulties, explore the root sources of the low performance of BBMI, and try to establish a model to propose possible solutions to the problem.

Research Question

In my personal view, one of crucial problems in BBMI is the lack of a shared vision. “One is hard-pressed to think of any organization that has sustained some measure of greatness in the absence of goals, values, and missions that become deeply shared throughout the organization” (Senge, 2013, p.9). A shared vision gives the pictures of the future of an organization and directs its people to move forward. Vision is the view of “what shall we do?” But before we take this step, we should have another question based on moral purpose in mind “what are the right things we should do?” Moral purpose is the internal, underlying belief or commitment. We grasp our moral purpose first, then we can establish our shared vision and do our jobs with passion.

China Public-sector Organization Reforms are carried out step by step, which may bring to BBMI another deep change. At this moment, it is very helpful and important for BBMI to have a clear shared vision to position itself and direct its future
tasks. In this paper, I will articulate that BBMI needs to establish a shared vision based on moral purpose and design the process of this vision establishment.

**Context**

**Beijing Business Management Institute (BBMI).** Beijing Business Management Institute was established in 1983. Adult students (not high school graduates) obtained their college degrees after finishing their two-year program of courses in BBMI. The State Council of China carried out Education Reform in colleges and universities in 2000. According to the policies of the Reform (State bulletin, 2000), the two-year college courses were stopped and BBMI began to provide short-term training courses to cooperative members for its superior department, All-China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives (ACFSMC) and became the only training center of ACFSMC on the national level.

This was a big transformation for BBMI. The target students changed from what were once all college students to what were now all cooperative members, managers and leaders. The curriculum changed from a program of two-year college courses to short-term cooperative training courses that usually ranged from one day to one month. The teaching location changed from the teaching facilities in BBMI in Beijing to a variety of teaching sites in different provinces.

Before the Education Reform, BBMI had a balanced budget with both financial funding from the government and tuition income from the students. When the two-year college courses were stopped, the financial funding from the government
and the training fund from ACFSMC were not enough to balance the whole budget of BBMI. Student dormitories and classrooms were rented out to the public and some chargeable fee-based courses, which catered to the training market demand, had to be provided to make up for the deficiency.

There were nearly 100 administrative members and teachers in BBMI. A reform of the personnel system had to be implemented to adapt to the transformation. Some teachers quit their jobs and some teachers took the positions of administrative employees which they had little or no experience in before taking on the positions.

Everyone in BBMI was facing great challenges and many difficulties. Many reforms had been carried out to adjust the steps to meet the requirements of the change. But until now, some main issues were still problematic (Field Notes, 1995-2014).

**All-China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives (ACFSMC).** Cooperatives have a history of more than 80 years in China. The government of the People’s Republic of China has always regarded the development of cooperatives as an important aspect in promoting agricultural and rural economic development, and given them conscientious guidance and support. There are different levels of cooperatives in China, including national, provincial, city, county and basic levels. The headquarters of All-China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives is located in Beijing. BBMI is the only training center for ACFSMC on the national level.
Supply and Market cooperatives are an important force for developing the rural areas and play a major role in ensuring the supplies of agricultural means of production, activating circulation of farm produce, promoting restructuring of agriculture and industrial management of agriculture, and activating the rural market. They make great contributions to promoting increases in agricultural production, farmers’ income and rural development (International Cooperation Department, 2011). As the ACFSMC’s training center, BBMI’s training courses are more concerned with rural economy, wholesale and retail, storage and logistics for agriculture products, and chain store marketing.

**Definition of terms**

**Public-sector Organization.** China has different management systems for enterprises and public-sector organizations. Public-sector organizations, which are fully or partly on a government-financed basis, mainly engage in education, science and technology, culture, and health activities to provide public services to the society. BBMI is a partially government-financed organization. With the rapid growth of the Chinese economy, the government is more and more faced with problems of indistinct divisions among the government, public-sector organizations and enterprises. In order to transform the management mode of the government and restructure the regime of public-sector organizations, the State Council of China is implementing the China Public-sector Organization Reforms. The Reforms are estimated to be finished in 2020. The Classification Reform is one major part of China Public-sector
Organization Reforms. According to the activities the organizations engage in and financial status the organizations have, the public-sector organizations will be classified into three groups: the first class public-sector organizations (which fully commit themselves to public service sectors, cannot or should not be allocated resources by the market), the second class public-sector organizations (which partly provide public services to the society, can get partial funding from the market) and the third class enterprises. The government will fund the public-sector organizations according to its classifications and enterprises will run themselves in the market (State bulletin, 2012). That means that the government will inspect the public-sector organization activities and their personnel allocation to see if and how the public-sector organizations provide public services to the society, and then decide if the government will (a) continue to offer funds and (b) the level of that funding. BBMI is wandering in the border between the first class and the second class of public-sector organizations.

Shared Vision. Peter M. Senge, in his book *The Fifth Discipline* (1990, p.206) describes a shared vision as “... a force in people's hearts, a force of impressive power”. A shared vision is a future picture that everyone in the organization carries in their heads and hearts and is willing to work for. There are two aspects in the concept: (a) an image of the future and (b) the forces that inspire, motivate and engage people. A shared vision is very important for the leadership in an organization. “If any one idea about leadership has inspired organizations for thousands of years, it’s the
capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create.” (Senge, 2013, p.8)

**Moral Purpose.** As far as the notion of “moral purpose”, we can see different versions from different perspectives. From an educational perspective, Will Ryan (2008) expounds “moral purpose” for educators is “…doing right things for our students” (p.9). From a business perspective, Nikos Mourkogiannis (2005) states in his article that moral purpose is a value that appeals to the innate sense held by some individuals of what is right and what is worthwhile when articulated. From the above statement, we can know that “moral purpose” is what people value, what they think are the right things that they should do, and that they should do it well.

**Justification of the study**

We know that “moral purpose” is what we think are the right things we should do, and then we will clarify the vision--what we are going to do and make plans to do it well. Therefore, moral purpose and vision are often discussed together. For BBMI, no matter how complicated the background and history it has, as a public funded educational institute, its moral purpose should not deviate from the direction of providing quality training programs to the participants and doing good and right things for them. However, what BBMI is doing obviously shows that it has not been too concerned about this issue.

A strong market orientation is present in BBMI. Because there are now no full time students, the idle and empty student dormitories were rebuilt into hotels. Classrooms were restructured into office rooms marketed for rent. The chargeable
fee-based training courses also brought BBMI extra income. Some staff members, including some leaders, are more interested in making money than providing quality training programs to the participants. The public training programs did not get the attention they deserved. There are now not enough staff members engaged in the public training programs and limited resources are allocated to them. Many teachers are invited from outside instead of the existing staff to teach in the public training courses. The professional development of BBMI’s own teaching staff is neglected.

An unclear moral purpose cannot contribute to a shared vision. People in BBMI have different opinions about the mission and future of the organization, which results in poor communication and poor relationships. Effective team learning is difficult to conduct. The staff members often complain about low efficiency and a perceived poor management mode. Many conflicts have arisen in BBMI.

The Classification Reform is estimated to be finished in 2020. The timetable of the Classification Reform has been explicit. Whether internal development demands of BBMI or outside reforms ask for a shared vision to be established based on the moral purpose as soon as possible.

**Brief overview of study**

BBMI is where I worked after my graduation from university. Several different job positions and 19 years of working experiences provided me opportunities to observe how BBMI ran, what difficulties it had and what realities it confronted. As one of the staff members of BBMI, I also committed myself to explore the root
reasons impeding its development and I looked for ways to provide possible assistance.

Qualitative data collection methods are used in this paper, including personal observations, online information and document analysis. Through these methods, it has been possible to analyze the reasons for BBMI’s unsatisfactory performance and produce a design research project that gives suggestions on how to develop a process of a shared vision based on moral purpose in BBMI.
Chapter 2  The Review of Literature

The importance of a shared vision

A shared vision is how organization members come together with similar values and philosophies. Senge (1990, 1994) describes that shared vision is about developing a sense of common identity and practices.

For an organization to prosper, it has to share a vision that stimulates people to want to succeed. The shared vision defines the common values, guides the behavior of the members and inspires the organization to march forward. According to Senge (1994), a shared vision gives employees energy and focus. Senge (1994) believes that people will work hard to accomplish the shared vision if they become stakeholders in it. Senge (1994) also states that striving to accomplish a shared vision will encourage people to take risks, experiment and become committed to a long-term view of the organization and its environment. All of these factors empower an organization to learn and transform itself as necessary to accomplish the organization's shared vision. Senge (2013) also believes “one is hard-pressed to think of any organization that has sustained some measure of greatness in the absence of goals, values, and missions that are deeply shared throughout the organization” (p.9).

A shared vision is so crucial for school and educational institutions’ development that identifying and establishing a clear vision is one of the most important responsibilities that educational leaders should undertake. Kouzes and Posner (1995) describe leadership as “the art of mobilizing others who want to
struggle for shared aspiration” (p.30). Deal and Peterson (2013) also state that “school leaders must be visionaries” (p.277). “Visionary leaders continually identify and communicate the hopes and dreams of the school, thus refocusing and refining the school’s purpose and mission” (p.277).

Leaders are expected to be the visionaries. But a shared vision in an organization is not just the leaders’ vision. Kouzes and Posner (2008) point out that what people really want to hear is their own aspirations instead of the leader’s vision, and the best leaders understand their key task is to inspire a shared vision. People are willing to be a part of vision sharing and development process and they want to hear how their dreams come true and how their hopes will be fulfilled (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). A shared vision, only when established in a collective process, can really help stakeholders to engage in the overall organization welfare.

More and more people are rethinking the traditional leadership style and looking to “give up our personal attempts at heroism” (Wheatley & Frieze, 2011, p.210). A clear and strong vision can be effective and fruitful in BBMI only when it is established in a collective process. Wheatley and Frieze (2011) describe that leaders can act as hosts, invite all the stakeholders to participate in the problem solving conversation through a collective process. Leaders-as-Hosts is a good way for BBMI leaders to carry on the shared vision process.

Moral purpose

Webster defines “moral” as “of or related to principles of right and wrong
behavior.” Fullan (2001) defines “moral purpose” as “acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers and society as a whole” (p.9). When we consider moral purpose of an organization, Mourkogiannis (2005) states in his article: “a moral purpose is a value that, when articulated, appeals to the innate sense held by some individuals of what is right and what is worthwhile” (p.27). The current nature of BBMI is not completely similar to the traditional public schools and colleges. But we can also obtain plenty of enlightenment from educational resources for their many similarities. Will Ryan (2008) states “moral purpose” for educators is “...doing right things for our students” (p.9). In brief, “moral purpose” is referring to “what are the right things we should do?”

Moral purpose asks leaders to take a wider context into consideration instead of only the one of their own organizations. “If school leaders do not concern themselves with the development of social and moral environment of the entire district, then not only will the school system deteriorate, but eventually their own schools will also fail” (Fullan, 2002, p.3). For BBMI, its moral purpose is closely related to the benefit of ACFSMC and public-sector organizations. It is narrow and shortsighted for BBMI to only focus on its own economic development.

Moral purpose allows leaders to inspire and lead organizations towards success smoothly. Joseph Badaracco, in his book Leading Quietly (2002), expounds that leaders who do right things lead quietly. They are at all levels of the organization and do not necessarily stand out.
And moral purpose is especially important for an organization to confront a transformation. Fullan (2003b) believes that to begin the change process you must first have a moral purpose. He has written about the need for leaders to “pay close attention to whether they are generating passion, purpose and energy - intrinsic motivation” without which, “any strategy for fundamental change will fail” (Fullan, 2003b, pp.62-3). As mentioned above, for BBMI to establish a shared vision and develop a deep transformation, moral purpose must be established as the base.

**Vision and Purpose**

The common purpose is the basis of the vision, we understand “what are the right things we should do” and “why”, then we know “what are we going to do” and “what is next”. “Inside out school leaders are committed to the fundamental purpose of the school. He / She dreams and shapes the vision around their desire to change the school and its community for the better by devising a realistic and attractive future” (Ryan, 2008, p.35).

The common purpose is also a part of the vision. Blanchard and Stoner (2011) believe that there are three key points that should be included in a vision: destination, purpose and value. Destination gives the end-results; purpose helps to answer “why”; value provide guiding force. None of the three alone can provide ongoing guidance and inspiration. The vision statement that works include the three.

Blanchard and Stoner (2011) in their road-map of the book *Full Steam Ahead*, also consider that the purpose identifying step should be the beginning of a
shared vision process. They believe that purpose is the reason for an organization’s existence and should be clearly identified.

**Transformation and Shared vision**

In *The Global Fourth Way*, Hargreaves and Shirley (2012, p. ix) say that “these are the dog days of public education and large-scale reform”. Educational transformation has become a normal state. In this changing world, how leadership works in the transformation process is the key question that every leader is considering. “Leadership is not inherent. It can be developed, taught, and learned; and shared vision points the way” (Roueche, et. al, 1989, p.vii). In their book *Shared Vision* (Roueche, et. al, 1989), the authors state that shared vision is the key element of transformational leadership.

Bennis and Nanus (1985) believe, for transformational leaders, having a vision of what the organization can become should be the first step they should take in the reform implement. Roueche, et al. (1989, p.26) also states that “a vision is necessary to articulate a possible and desirable state for the organization. By providing this vision, the transformational leader is in a position to assist individuals in deriving rewards from their roles in the organization, as the organization finds its rewards from identifying a niche in society”. That is, the vision helps transformational leaders to position their organization in the society, which is just what BBMI leaders require at present time.

In BBMI, professional development of teachers has been neglected for a quite
long period of time. The teachers particularly need to be motivated by transformational leaders with a vision. “Transformational leaders are attuned to inspiring teachers to new levels of energy and commitment towards a common mission, which develops the school’s capacity to work together to overcome challenges and reach ambitious goals, and then to ensure that teachers have time to conduct their teaching” (Hattie, 2012, p.154).

Compared to the traditional leadership theories with strongly heroic and hierarchical characteristics, modern theories of leadership focus more on public participation and collective decision-making. The power of public participation and collective decision-making cannot be ignored by transformational leaders in the shared vision process. Wheatley and Frieze (2011) describe seven journeys that the people in the book *Walk Out Walk On* take. They “walk out” of old systems and “walk on” towards new experiments and new ways of thinking, organizing and solving problems. Gradually, they find and learn from each other and connect with one another. They support each other to continue their pioneering work. A new system is born by their joint efforts. Wheatley (2009) also emphasizes that the world is abundantly rich in leaders because a leader is anyone willing to help. Great and famous changes may happen with the actions of just a few people. She advocates people to step forward, though little by little, step by step, so that the people can resolve the problems that they care about and restore hope for the future. In BBMI, employees should be widely invited into the shared vision process for the whole organization’s welfare and future success.
Chapter 3 Models and Methodologies

Many different forms can be used to design a shared vision process, ranging from off-site meetings to more follow-up extended engagements. Many authors have stated different forms of shared vision processes and moral purpose clarifying methods. Considering the specific situation of BBMI, I refer to two models of shared vision processes to establish a new one to meet the BBMI requirements. The two models are “Full Steam Ahead” method and the “Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Summit” method. I have drawn much inspiration from their brilliant ideas.

Full Steam Ahead

*Full Steam Ahead* written by Blanchard and Stoner (2011) gives a complete road-map to establish a shared vision.

![Road-map of Full Steam Ahead](https://twitter.com/jesselynstoner/status/569879407063650304)
**Three Elements in a Vision.** Great visions consist of three basic elements: Destination, Purpose and Value. These are the answers for where we are going, why do we exist, and what principles do we take on the journey (Blanchard & Stoner, 2011). The purpose clarifying step is included in the vision process in this book.

Destination serves the purpose of the future picture of success which can create tremendous energy to team members to help them overcome uncountable obstacles to move forward. Once a milestone has been accomplished, team members may pause to explore the purpose to ask “why?” and “what is next?” “why do we exist?” and “What should we serve?” These are the questions often asked not only in the beginning but also in the breaks of a journey (Blanchard & Stoner, 2011). BBMI is encountering a “break”, in which all members should pause for a while to clarify and reaffirm their moral purpose. However, a clear destination and a strong purpose are still not enough. Values are the members’ commonly believed fundamentally important guidelines to follow, and which should be rigidly adhered to for making choices or taking actions (Blanchard & Stoner, 2011).

A vision that works should consist of all the three elements, otherwise, it cannot provide enough guidance and inspiration (Blanchard & Stoner, 2011). BBMI should also take these three elements into consideration for their shared vision process.

**Clarifying the purpose.** Clarifying the purpose is the first part of establishing a vision. BBMI can get a clear and significant purpose by asking these questions: “what business are you really in?”; “How do people benefit from what you offer?”; “How
does your service benefit society at large?"; and "what is the end-result that you offer?" (Blanchard & Stoner, 2011). Furthermore, as a public-sector organization, funded by the government, BBMI has to have an articulated “moral” purpose. This purpose is the reason for BBMI’s existence. After full discussion and communication, BBMI employees will reach a common answer to the above questions.

**Implementation Methods.** It is unfruitful to only create a shared vision statement (Blanchard & Stoner, 2011). Effective implementation methods must be taken to ensure the realization of the vision, including strategies and actions to move forward, involvement and communication plans, and personal commitments. A great shared vision has to be created through a systematic mechanism. BBMI leaders should be fully aware that a shared vision process is a long-term event. All these implementation methods have to be given full consideration.

**Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Summit method**

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Summit method is a very useful and positive way for an organization to imagine and enact its desired future (Ludema et al., 2003). The Appreciative Inquiry Summit is a method for accelerating change by involving a broad range of internal and external stakeholders in the change process (Ludema et al., 2003, p. 9). Since the early 1990s, hundreds of organizations worldwide in the corporate, nonprofit, government and community sectors have widely used this methodology for addressing a variety of problems, including leadership development, strategic planning, vision and values clarification, organization design, etc. (Ludema et al., 2003).
Figure 2: 4-D Circles of the AI Summit

Adapted from The Appreciative Inquiry Summit. James D. Ludema, Diana Whitney, Bernard J. Mohr, & Thomas J. Griffin. 2003

**Positive thinking method.** Management methods have gradually evolved from experts solving problems for other people toward methods where everybody is improving the whole system. Compared with the traditional methodologies, the AI Summit breaks new ground by stressing the relational nature of innovation and by highlighting the power of positive to unleash extraordinary organizational performance (Ludema et al., 2003).

There are many thorny historical problems in BBMI, including personnel decisions, clarity of the property rights, and economic disputes. The age of the employees is becoming more and more of a serious issue. Contrasting views and frequent conflicts among these older employees are occurring regularly. Leaders have tried various methods to deal with this issue, however it has not had an effective
impact on the organization’s development.

BBMI employees argued and criticized one another when they talked about some historic events and current problems. “The more problems people discovered, the more discouraged they became, and the more discouraged they became, the more they began to blame one another for the problem” (Ludema et al., 2003, p6). By focusing on empowering and energizing the system, such as analysis of all the generative themes, moments of success, experiences of high points, and stories of innovation, hope, courage, and positive change, instead of the root-cause analysis of failure, the AI Summit is a radical reversal of the traditional problem-solving approach (Ludema et al., 2003), which is the method I would like to recommend to BBMI.

**Explicit timetable to carry out.** For a typical four-day AI Summit process, organizers estimate at least eight days of work before the summit, four days during the summit, which is designed to flow through the appreciative inquiry 4-D circles of discovery, dream, design and destiny, and four or more days after the summit (Ludema et al., 2003). They design specific procedures for each step, which is very explicit to carry out. For BBMI, the appreciative inquiry 4-D circles is an appropriate way to establish the shared vision. But for the proposed plan to realize the vision suggested by this study, I will combine Full Steam Ahead process and AI Summit method together.

**Self-management.** AI Summits are intended to be a dialogue of equals. This is
based on the idea that people will give their best effort and most energy when they are fully co-creators of their common future (Ludema et al., 2003). In this process, BBMI leaders can act as hosts and rely on other people’s creativity and commitment to get the work done. People will only support those things they have played a part in (Wheatley & Frieze, 2011). People should be trusted to have the potential and creativity to make decisions concerning their own life and future, and they are willing to contribute. Paying attention to what others are talking about and listening carefully will help people understand problems more and solve them better. Trust and listening are the panacea to influence more people in really joining the process. The shared vision process will be more successful when employees are widely engaged in it.

**The Proposed Model**

These two models have many characters and particular emphasis of their own. Carefully considering the situation of BBMI and referring to these two models, I construct a distinct shared vision process from my perspective for BBMI.

**How the model is composed.** There are five stages in this process design. Firstly, in looking at Figure 1 above, I combine the part of “Significant Purpose Exploring” from step 1 “Create Shared Vision” with step 2 “Honestly Describe Current Reality” together in the Road-map of Full Steam Ahead as my proposed stage 1--Current Reality and Moral Purpose Discussion. Stage 2--Shared Vision Establishment includes “discovery and dream” parts form 4-D cycle of AI Summit. Stage 3--Strategies and Actions to Move Forward and stage 4--Plan for
Involvement and Communications are also the reflection of the “design” part in AI Summit method. Stage 5--Leader Commitments is a combination of Personal Commitments in the Road-map and “destiny” part from 4-D circle of AI Summit.

The chart is as follows:

Figure 3: Shared Vision Process for BBMI

The significant stage. Stage 1 - Current Reality and Moral Purpose Discussion is the most significant part in my model. I hope the BBMI members can have abundant dialogue on this issue and be fully aware of the internal and external
requirements and pressures. The government has emphasized economic development since 1990s. Many public-sector organizations also chase after the economic targets whereas neglect quality public service providing, which is apparently not in accordance with the moral purpose of these public sector organizations. The Chinese government is setting about the clean-up and rectification work and pushing the public-sector organizations back to their original mission. Many conflicts in BBMI are also coming from different senses of identification between the economic targets and quality public service providing among the BBMI employees. Once a common opinion can be reached, a solid foundation will be laid for the following stages.

**Sincere Communication.** Communication is the “thread” connecting all stages together. It is the most important key to the success of the shared vision process. The average age of BBMI members is 45 (Documents, 2015). Some members have worked in BBMI for more than 30 years. They are quite familiar with the historical situation and current realities. The only “technique” that should be used in this process has to be the sincere communication. “In a 2009 international study, the majority of people said they trust a stranger more than they trust their boss” (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p.75). It is also happened in BBMI. Leaders establish their credibility by the component of trustworthiness (Kouzes & Posner, 2010), which has to be gained through sincere communication with members. Credibility is the foundation of leadership. You cannot lead without credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). With an open mindset, communicating with members sincerely, and developing a cohesive and
collaborative team, BBMI leaders will have the opportunity to carry on a successful shared vision process.
Chapter 4 The Shared Vision Process Design

Before going through all five stages of the model, many activities must be taken first to ensure the effect (Ludema et al., 2003), including:

- **Enlisting a group of sponsors.** In BBMI, the president, the vice-president in charge of the personnel department and all division-chiefs should be included.

- **Forming a working team.** The president, the vice-president in charge of the personnel department and all employees in the personnel department are suggested to be in the working team.

- **Defining the task.** Establishing a shared vision for BBMI.

- **Selecting participants.** All employees in BBMI should participate in the process.

- **Making the plan.** Including crafting the agenda, determining the format and content of the process and any other details around implementing the plan.

Once these preparation activities have been completed, then implementing the whole process will be as follows:

**Stage 1: Current Reality and Moral Purpose Discussion**

Discussion on moral purpose and the current reality can be conducted together in BBMI to reinforce its moral purpose. As a public-sector organization, BBMI has the innate function to provide quality service to the public, which is also what the majority of staff members think is the right thing to do, and what is worthwhile for them to strive for. Moreover, the Classification Reform is bringing BBMI external pressure to review its moral purpose, which is also examining all job descriptions and
their related remuneration of all the staff in BBMI. The presidents in BBMI should
make a thorough explanation of this issue in an institution-wide meeting in which all
staff members participate.

Secondly, the working team can organize different group discussions. Each
group should include at least one president. Leaders and their staff members
participate the discussion together and opinions and information are widely shared.
The topic should be concentrated on the moral purpose issue and the reality of the
Classification Reform instead of internal problems or difficulties exploring and
weakness blaming.

Thirdly, the sponsor group and the working team should have a review of the
discussions. A common consensus should be reached on what are the right things for
BBMI to do as a public-sector organization. In my personal opinion, whatever the
content it will contain, the moral purpose of BBMI cannot deviate from providing
quality public service to the specific group of people. Providing training programs to
cooperative members should be the center job of BBMI.

Stage 2: Shared Vision Establishment

It may take two steps to finish this stage.

Step 1: “Positive Core” Discovery. The following questions will be discussed:

“Who are we, individually and collectively?”; “What resources do we bring?”;
“What are our core competencies?”; “What hopes and dreams do we have for the
future?”; “What are the most hopeful macro trends impacting us at this time?”.
Group discussion will be continually organized to discover highlight stories and to focus on best practices in the organization based on answers to these five questions.

Then, the sponsor group, the working team and representatives from each group will illustrate all the strengths, resources, capabilities, competencies, positive hopes and feelings, relationships, alliances and so on. The list of this “positive core” will be referred back to each group.

BBMI has the following strengths which may be highlighted in the discussion:
(a) BBMI is the only training center for ACFSMC on the national level (b) it is the biggest public-sector organization of ACFSMC in Beijing (c) it has a very good location (close to the international airport and the railway station) and housing facilities (d) it has established good relations with many provincial and city level cooperatives and (e) BBMI has completed some unique research work which is very helpful for training courses.

**Step 2 : Vision Dream.** This is a step of envisioning the organization’s great potential for positive influence and impact for the society (Ludema et al., 2003). The following questions can be given to each group: “*If you look ahead to the year 2020, and BBMI has become exactly what you have wished for..... What is happening?*”; “*What is different from the present situation?*”; “*What is BBMI contributing to the society?*”; “*What influence and impact is BBMI giving to all cooperatives in China?*”

According to information collected from the answers to these questions, each
group will try to create a common guiding image of the future for BBMI. The sponsor group and the working team will summarize these guiding images and form one collective image. This collective image (“Vision”) will be referred back to each group for further discussion. After two to three rounds, a final consensus vision statement including destination, purpose and value for BBMI should be reached.

**Stage 3: Strategies and Actions to Move Forward**

An organization might start off with a clear shared vision, but unaligned strategies and actions can quickly derail it (Blanchard & Stoner, 2011). Shared vision requires strategies and actions to fulfill it. Strategies and actions are the commitment of an organization to move forward in the direction of the shared vision. This is also the most difficult part of the whole process of shared vision establishment because strategies and actions may directly impact job responsibilities and the relevant interests of the staff members.

Strategy and action discussion can be conducted in the same groups or reorganized groups. Wheatley and Frieze (2011) believe it is a good way to solve large-scale and intractable problems: Leaders-as-hosts invest in meaningful conversations among people from many parts of the system to discover internal resources and solutions. The traditional leadership is being challenged by the modern non-hierarchy view that leadership is a collective process rather than an individual practice (Hare & Portelli, 2005). People are more and more confident to participate in decision-making associated with their own future and welfare. “Power is not
employed by one or more people to control others, but used as a resource to work for collective interests.” (Hare & Portelli, 2005, p.23) The employees should be given more opportunities to engage in the process of leadership in BBMI.

Although there are many topics that can be included in this stage. I believe the following should be highlighted:

**Changing Strong Market Orientation.** Chargeable training courses can bring BBMI great benefits which largely increase the staff members’ income. Staff members who are engaged in these courses even earn much more, which results in serious market orientation in BBMI. The staff members at times show more interest in the earnings of the training courses than the quality of them. The training quality is deteriorating, especially for the cooperative training courses. ACFSMC is unsatisfied with the performance of BBMI and has withdrawn some cooperative training courses and reduced some funding support (Field Notes, 1995-2015).

ACFSMC understands the situation and is trying to solve the problem now. It is considering ways to provide sufficient funding to BBMI on the condition that BBMI concentrates on the cooperative training courses and gives up the chargeable courses. However, some staff members - even some presidents - do not want to give up offering the chargeable courses because this means they will earn less in the future (Field Notes, 1995-2015).

Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) criticize market-oriented policies and strategies designed to yield short-term economic returns. They believe these are moving in the
wrong direction for education. BBMI is a state-funding public institute. It is the basic function for BBMI to provide its members training courses with good quality. Strong market orientation, which had been apparently off its original mandate, is urgently needed to be changed in BBMI.

**Providing sufficient Support to cooperative training courses.** BBMI did not allocate sufficient resources to the training departments, including human resources and financial support. In one training department, which provides training courses to cooperative members, there are only six staff members who are responsible for making the plans and curriculum, organizing courses, booking venues, inviting teachers and participant management. They organize 50-60 training programs per year. There is a rigid financial target system in BBMI. The training departments have to achieve the financial target set by BBMI. The income of its staff members is closely connected with the financial target. Therefore its staff members are busy offering more programs to fill the financial target rather than paying attention to improving the course quality (Field Notes, 1995-2015). The financial target system is damaging the fulfillment of BBMI’s moral purpose. This management strategy should be reconsidered to be applicable to the reality and inspire its people instead of simple “carrot and stick” policy. BBMI should allocate training departments more human resources and financial support to improve the quality of training courses.

**Emphasis on teachers’ professional development.** BBMI invites many experts, university professors or ACFSMC officers to be the teachers for the most of
their training courses. Only a few training teachers come from BBMI itself. The institute teachers do not fill the full-time teaching jobs. They teach courses and also do plenty of administrative work. Because there is no long-term plan, BBMI neglects professional development of its own teachers, their teachers’ research results’ application to training courses and the effect of good teaching. And some leaders frequently change the main training programs, for example, Digital New Network in 2008, County Festival Forum in 2009, International Communication and Promotion Program in 2010 (Latest news, 2008-2010). The teachers often cannot keep up with the changes and follow the program as it continually changes. Classroom teachers are the key educators in the training programs. Though some training teachers can be experts or professors from other organizations or universities, BBMI should cultivate its own high performance teacher group to guarantee the quality of training courses and place emphasis on improving their professional development. BBMI should provide teachers more opportunities to have field visits in different cooperatives to grasp the first hand teaching materials and make the feasible plan to lead learning in the institute.

Stage 4: Plan for Involvement and Communications

It is very interesting to see a team of committed managers with individual IQs above 120 have a collective IQ of 63 (Senge, 2013). The paradox also happens in BBMI. Because of lack of a shared vision, the leaders in BBMI often have different opinions on important issues and each leader has his own followers. Sometimes, if
they have to take the decision made by the upper level or ACFSMC, they are not very conscientious and would simply muddle through this work. Low efficiency, bad performance and poor quality of training all frequently happen. It is difficult for them to have true “dialogue”, where they communicate and “think together”. Involvement and communications are important issues in BBMI (Field Notes, 1995-2015).

It will be a long-term plan for BBMI to improve involvement and communications. It is possible to combine the vision realizing process with the plan implementation together. Vision-lacking and team-disunity co-exist in BBMI. Because of different opinions on the future and main issues, team members do not support one another or ever undermine each others’ work. In the meanwhile, they do not get along with one another and contribute little to their jobs. In return, it is more difficult for them to establish a common vision. In this sense, vision realizing process has to be combine with involvement and communication implementation. Good involvement and communication will contribute to effective team learning. “the discipline of team learning starts with ‘dialogue’, the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine ‘thinking together’” (Senge, 2013, p.9). In this plan, both positive and negative factors of involvement and communications should be fully understood. “The discipline of dialogue also involves learning how to recognize the patterns of interaction in teams that undermine learning.” (Senge, 2013, p.10)

Many methods and norms can be taken to build the plan. No matter what the
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plan is and how it is implemented, it is most important for BBMI employees to keep in mind that shared vision realization calls for bridging differences and reaching a consensus.

**Stage 5: leader commitments**

In this last stage, the leaders in BBMI are expected to make commitments to make changes and declare their intention for action to the public. Cooperation and support are also appealed to for the shared vision process. The following key points are strongly suggested to be taken in the commitments.

**Changing Leadership Style.** The president and all vice-presidents are appointed by ACFSMC. They obtain their power from this higher-level unit. The leadership in BBMI largely resides in the hands of a single person or sometimes a subset of people. He/they, also talk with and seek opinions from the employees but he/she mainly make decisions according to his or their own personal practices rather than through collective processes (Field Notes, 1995-2015).

Presidents often have different opinions on some important issues of BBMI. But they do not believe in the common staff members. They think they are more capable of making good decisions for BBMI and fighting for the welfare for its staff. The common staff members often cannot fully understand the policies and decisions that the presidents have made. Because of this lack of understanding, staff members do not like to participate in the presidents’ decisions, which also results in lower efficiency in the work and poorer quality in the courses (Field Notes, 1995-2015).
The presidents in BBMI should be fully aware of the development trend of leadership, and change their leadership styles for the common interests of all. Punishment and rewards are not effective ways of motivating people any more. Trusting people and having them widely engage in the process of leadership are the workable ways to meeting the overwhelming challenges (Wheatley & Frieze, 2011). Leaders should see the potential and skills of its people, trust and rely on their creativity and commitment to get the work done. The leaders should know that people will only support those things they have played a part in (Wheatley & Frieze, 2011). The leaders in BBMI should “walk out” of heroic and hierarchical leadership, address thorny problems in conversational processes to get the desired result. (Wheatley & Frieze, 2011).

**Being forward-looking and systems thinking.** Though it is hard to see the whole pattern of change, we still strive to generate our systems thinking to make the full patterns clearer and to see the change effectively from the snapshots of isolated parts of system (Senge, 2013). “Vision without systems thinking ends up painting lovely pictures of the future with no deep understanding of the forces that must be mastered to move from here to there”(Senge, 2013, p.11). The public-sector organizations in China will be classified into three types according to what and how they provide public services and the main business they engage in and then get the financial support from government accordingly (China News, 2011). The organizations that fully engage in business activities in the market will be transferred
to enterprises and have no financial support from the government (China News, 2011).

It is the time for BBMI leaders to be forward-looking and systems-thinking about the future. Establishing a shared vision and being forward-looking together is an urgent task for all BBMI members.

“Rome was not build in one day.” Compared to establishing a shared vision based on moral purpose, it is more difficult for BBMI employees to keep in pursuit of the shared vision and realize it. Follow-up activities and supporting teams are needed to ensure the right direction of the vision (Ludema et al., 2003). This will be a long and difficult journey for BBMI.
Chapter 5 Conclusion

Summary

BBMI is a public-sector organization with 32 years of history. It has cultivated tens of thousands of graduates (About us, 2015) for the society and has had many moments of glory. It is the only training center of ACFSMC on the national level at present. It has the responsibility and task to provide professional training to cooperatives and cooperative members. As mentioned in the previous chapters, BBMI is facing many problems and difficulties on its journey of evolution.

Success depends on knowing who you are, where you are going, and what will guide your journey- having a vision (Blanchard & Stoner, 2011). In my personal opinion, the lack of having a shared vision based on moral purpose is the root cause of BBMI’s dilemmas. Developing a shared vision for the organization will motivate all BBMI employees to move ahead. Having this shared vision is not simply for the leader; it is for the common good. By seeking to reach the more profound hopes of all stakeholders, BBMI leaders can weave independent ideas into a collective vision (Deal and Peterson, 1994). This will light the future road of BBMI.

In order to help BBMI to get out of this difficult situation, I referred to models and methodologies on the shared vision process, analyzed the internal programs and external pressure for BBMI, established a model according to Full Steam Ahead process and AI Summit method to try to solve BBMI’s vision problem, and gave the proposed plan which I hope will be beneficial to BBMI.
Finance Analysis Support

There are 83 employees active in their positions and 90 retired employees (in China, retired employees get their salary and bonuses from the organization where they retire) in BBMI (Documents, 2015). It is important to maintain the stability of personnel and financial structures, which should be carefully considered when a series of transformational initiatives are implemented.

Financial data from BBMI in 2014 also indicate that BBMI will not have financial difficulties if it changes its market orientation and carries out this plan followed by the shared vision based on moral purpose. As shown in 2014 Financial Revenue and Expenditure in BBMI, the Total Revenue and Total Expenditure were RMB¥ 34.02 million and RMB¥ 32.03 million respectively, with the Balance of RMB¥ 1.99 million. The Total Revenue of BBMI consists of two parts: (a) the revenue from the government and (b) the revenue from undertakings which includes incomes from BBMI hotels, magazine, property rental management, and training. The total training income is RMB¥ 6.63 million in 2014, almost 50% of which are the training funds from ACFSMC. This specific year saw training income reach its highest point in many years (Documents, 2014).

The total training expenditure of BBMI was RMB¥ 3.37 million in 2014. That means the training contributed RMB¥ 3.26 million margin, which included nearly 50% ACFSMC funds, to the whole budget of BBMI. The personnel expenditure for BBMI in 2014 was RMB¥ 18.23 million, which embodied the majority of the
public-sector organization (Documents, 2014).

According to the financial analysis of the BBMI budget, the non-cooperative training income counts for a small part of the annual whole budget. From this point of view, BBMI employees have a solid economic base to change the prevailing market orientation and reaffirm its moral purpose.

**Discussion: personal vision of leaders and a shared vision**

“The evidence is clear. The most effective principals have a clear sense of vision and purpose. They know themselves and their personal ethic. They also recognize the importance of vision to guide their work with teachers and other school personnel” (Ronald, 2009, p.1). “In addition to the roles of historians or anthropologists, school leaders must also be visionaries” (Deal & Peterson, 2013, p.277). Many authors state that school leaders should have a strong vision which can make sense of the future image and dream positively. But these leaders’ personal ideas must be in accordance with the hopes and dreams that the whole organization holds. “Visionary leaders must listen closely to the members, probe for the latent sentiments, values, and expectations for the common future and bring all these for public discussion, consideration, and enactment” (Deal & Peterson, 2013, p.277). Leaders must develop a shared vision. If not in service of a shared vision, the leadership efforts are in danger of becoming self-serving (Blanchard & Stoner, 2011).

In eastern countries, the hierarchical leadership style has a long-term dominance. Leaders used to take their personal vision as a common vision to carry on.
“Such a view, however, is increasingly being challenged. One alternate approach, for example, circulates the idea that leadership is a collective rather than an individual practice. Another related view that departs even more radically from the latter is that leadership is a collective process” (Hare & Portelli, 2005, p.23).

A strong, clear and collective vision will lead to the success of the organization, yet a personal self-serving vision will definitely lose the support of organization members. We have learned many lessons on the similar issue in the BBMI’s history. A shared vision, not a leader’s personal vision, is expected to inspire and motivate all members to move forward. This is a key point which should be paid close attention to during the shared vision process in BBMI.

**Limitation of the research**

The situation of BBMI is different from that of ordinary colleges with post-secondary students. It is also different from many training centers because its superior department is ACFSMC, which is a giant cooperative organization with many traditional “Chinese characteristics”. It is a quite distinctive and unique “case”. “Case study research is an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena” (Merriam, 1988, p.2). Therefore the case study method is appropriate in my research design. The specificity of the BBMI case determines that it has no universal significance and its model is not very applicable to other colleges and training centers.

“The depth and detail of qualitative data can be obtained only by getting close,
physically and psychologically, to the phenomenon under study” (Patton, 1980, p.43).

The qualitative data collection methods of Field observations and documentations which based on my real-life context are widely used in this paper. Data analysis and model establishment are based on these qualitative data. The research design is inevitably and inherently subjective at this point.

Some quantitative data have been used in the paper. Some statistics come from the reports of documents of the year of 2014 and 2015, which are most recent. However, in general, the lack of quantitative data and analysis makes this paper not that objective. Some key statistics (for example, the portion of training income from government and ACFSMC funds), are missing from the financial report, and thus had to be estimated from other documents. This made the analysis results not so persuasive.

**Conclusion**

It is crucial for an organization to have a shared vision which can give the future image that all members of the organization dream of and work towards together. Establishing a shared vision is an essential leadership obligation. “If any one idea about leadership has inspired organizations for thousands of years, it’s the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create” (Senge, 2013, p.8).

For confronting its many management problems and severe market orientation, BBMI is in urgent need of a clear, strong, collective vision to light the way for its future journey. But before BBMI members set out for the journey, they may still have
these questions: “Why should we go?”, “Why do we exist?” Moral purpose clarifying is the starting point of the shared vision process. BBMI members have expectations for their leaders to look forward and take the responsibility to help the establishment of the vision based on a clear moral purpose.

As visionaries, BBMI leaders have to combine their personal visions and common vision of employees together systematically to motive and inspire the followers. Kouzes and Posner emphasized,

Being forward-looking means having a sense of direction and a concern for the future of the organization. Whether it is called a vision, a mission, or a personal agenda, the message is clear: You must know where you are going if you expect others to willingly join you on the journey. But it is not just your vision that others care to know. They also expect that you will be able to connect your image of the future to their hopes, dreams, and aspirations. People will not willingly follow you until they can see how they share in the future you envision (2010, pp19-20).

A shared vision will be fully effective only when BBMI leaders change their traditional hierarchical leadership style and help to establish the vision through a collective process.

A shared vision can be established in a few days according to an explicit vision model. But it is a long journey to fulfill the shared vision with the proposed plan.
BBMI leaders should seriously consider the actions and strategies of changing the strong market orientation, providing sufficient support to cooperative training courses and encouraging teachers’ professional development. In view of the long-term conflicts existing in BBMI, an involvement and communications plan should be carried out throughout the whole vision process to contribute effective team learning and true “dialogue”. Common values should be promoted.

Kouzes and Posner (2010) told the leaders: “You make a difference.” It is clear that BBMI leaders need to open themselves up to change and to take actions that create a new foundation for the future strength of the organization. Along with the competence of being forward-looking, system thinking and adapting their leadership style, the BBMI leaders’ courage and determination will play the most important roles in the shared vision process.
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