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The Organization in Balance
Reflection and Intuition as Complementary Processes

Abstract Two complementary processes that are important in learning within organizations, namely reflection and intuition, are analysed. This includes the introduction of a phase model for reflection. Intuition is examined using concepts borrowed from transpersonal psychology. Within this context, the work of Maslow is discussed and related to Wilber’s ideas about the higher stages of human consciousness. Our society places considerable emphasis on rationality and efficiency, which means that reflection often receives more attention than intuition. Both are important, however, and the author argues that in the end it is a question of integrating the reflective and intuitive processes. A concrete method useful for supporting that process is described. Key Words: coaching; intuition; mission; organizational development; reflection

A core question organizations are now increasingly asking themselves is: how can we see to it that people are willing and able to adjust to constantly changing circumstances? Indeed, developments are now proceeding at such a pace that what you learn today may be obsolete tomorrow. It is vital that employees learn how to manage their own development, so that they learn from each new experience, and become ever more proficient at independently integrating new insights into their day-to-day activities. This idea is crucial to the concept of the learning organization (Senge, 1990). But this concept, fruitful though it is, is not in itself sufficient. What is important is how employees in organizations learn from their work experiences, and how they learn to direct their own development, even in the midst of complex change processes.

For leaders and trainers in organizations, the search for answers to the how question is not easy. On the one hand, there is a plethora of books and courses stressing the importance of working and learning on the basis of rational approaches. These emphasize strategic policy, planning and control, competence management, and specific qualifications and indicators for both products and people. At the same time there has also been a rise in the number of new books
and training courses emphasizing the importance of ‘natural processes’ taking shape from ‘the inside out’. Here the emphasis is on the employee as a person, the organic processes at work within the organization, the inner qualities of the leader, as well as spirituality, inspiration, and flow (see e.g. Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Broadly speaking, we have here two major approaches based on very different assumptions. *How can these two approaches be combined into one effective approach towards learning in organizations?* This question guided our study, in which we followed the guidelines for development research (Van den Akker and Plomp, 1993). As Van den Akker (1999: 5, 7) states, in this type of research:

theoretical ideas of the designer feed the development of products that are tested in classroom settings, eventually leading to theoretically and empirically founded products, learning processes of the developers, and [local] instructional theories. […] Development research is often initiated for complex, innovative tasks for which only very few validated principles are available to structure and support the design and develop activities. […] The aim is not to elaborate and implement complete interventions, but to come to [successive] prototypes that increasingly meet the innovative aspirations and requirements. This process is often cyclic or spiral: analysis, design, evaluation and revision activities are iterated until a satisfying balance between ideals and realization has been achieved.

In this article, we report on the outcomes of the problem analysis phase, and the phase of designing a new approach, which resulted in a professional development course for people working in organizations. We also present the first evaluative results. This implies that this article does not present the results of an in-depth empirical study, but rather describes an initial attempt to explore a new field of enquiry. Hence most of the sections are aimed at sketching the map of a rather unknown territory. However, in the latter part of this article, we do present some concrete empirical findings, and discuss these critically.

**Analytical Reflection**

The literature on learning in organizations generally acknowledges the constructivist principle that people learn primarily by actively structuring their own experiences through the personal attribution of meaning (e.g. Fosnot, 1996). Many publications, also in this journal (e.g. Schipper, 1999; Smith, 2001), emphasize that this structuring of experiences can take place in a more or less conscious way: people are capable of learning how to consciously and systematically reflect on their work experiences (Marsick, 1988; Tight, 2000). This involves a process which constantly alternates between work and learning from that work, and which culminates in learning during work (Marsick, 1988). Boud et al. (1985: 19) emphasize the fundamental role of reflection in this process of learning during work: ‘Reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. It is this working with experience that is important in learning.’

This view of reflection, as well as the approaches of many others, is rooted in the work of Dewey (1933), who stated that reflection entails a chain of thoughts, which ‘are linked together so that there is a sustained movement to a common end’ (p. 5). He arrives at the following definition:
Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought. (p. 9)

Another author often cited when the concept of reflection is being discussed, is Schön (1983), who built his views on design principles. He distinguishes between reflection-in-action (during the act) and reflection-on-action (after the act). Schön states that reflection-in-action and experimentation go together: ‘When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case’ (p. 68). One aspect of this ‘construction of a new theory of the unique case’, is the assessment of the assumptions implicit in the way we solve practical problems (Mezirow et al., 1990).

Figure 1 shows an example of a model that is helpful in promoting a systematic process of reflection on practical situations (Korthagen et al., 2001). It is called the ALACT model of reflection (after the initials of the five phases), with phase 5 being the first phase of a new cycle.

Because, in phases 2 to 4, the individual has gradually become aware of something new, ultimately leading to behavioural alternatives, in the final phase something has been learned. Thus the new cycle represents a qualitative improvement over the previous one, which is why we call this a spiral model for reflection. To be more precise, it is a model for analytical reflection; there are also other approaches, such as meditative reflection, which are less analytical. Readers who in this reflection model see aspects of the better-known model developed by Kolb

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**Figure 1** The ALACT model describing the ideal process of reflection

Creating alternative methods of action  
Awareness of essential aspects  
Looking back on the action  
Trial  
Action  
1  
2  
3  
4  
5
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decisions that do not appear to be logical, or which they find very difficult to explain. Apparently, there are other processes directing their actions, which often are at least equally effective. Various authors from such widely ranging fields as neurophysiology, social psychology, cognitive psychology, education, and philosophy have made a distinction between a logical-analytical manner of information processing by human beings and an entirely different manner, for which a variety of terms have been proposed. Examples are the distinctions between analytically and holistic or rational and non-rational (Ornstein, 1972), analytically and Gestalt (Levy-Agresti and Sperry, 1968), explicit and tacit (Polyani, 1961), verbal and perceptual (Milner, quoted in Bogen, 1973).

Although admittedly not the same, all these dichotomies appear to refer to two distinct functions of the human brain. Already in the 1970s, in his famous article ‘Planning on the Left Side and Managing on the Right’, Mintzberg (1976) pointed towards the consequences for organizations. He has been followed by many others advocating ‘whole brain thinking’ (e.g. Wonder and Donovan, 1984), although nowadays we know that there is more to it than a simple division into the right and left half of the brain (Bryden, 1982; Damasio, 1999). In the present article, the shared core of all the various dichotomies mentioned in this section will be referred to as the contrast between (analytical) reflection and intuition. The first term has been clarified; the second will require some further clarification.

Intuition

In the case of intuition, it is a question of seeing through things, getting down to what is implicit, uncovering the layer that lies beneath the surface, the things that cannot be expressed directly, in linear language (Davis-Floyd and Arvidson, 1997; Goldberg, 1983; Parikh, 1994). There are many anecdotes about top managers who ‘knew’ exactly what had to be done in a critical situation, even though they had not sat down and reasoned it out (see e.g. Agor, 1989). Simon (1989) describes how managers themselves are aware that many of their best decisions were taken intuitively. It is interesting that in retrospect they are often good at coming up with a ‘logical’ version of the decision.

Within the present context, we will not go through all the extensive literature on the role of intuition in management. However, we wish to point to a few aspects that are relevant to how we build on this concept in the final part of this article.

First, for intuition a certain acceptance is needed that one cannot completely control situations or rationally understand them (Ford, 1977, cited in Agor, 1989; Harbort, 1997). There has to be a certain confidence that the right insight may just emerge.

Second, one has to accept that intuitive processes are hard to describe in words. In day-to-day work situations, control and direct communication in simple language are important: then we at least know what we’re talking about! Or is it possible that we only think we know what we’re talking about (Edwards, 1986)?

Finally, what we sometimes refer to as intuition is often no more than the accelerated completion of a logical analysis (Goldberg, 1983). And yet there is a great difference between a chess computer, which is capable of rapidly calculating a large number of variants, and a Grand Master who, in a matter of seconds, can
picture the essential patterns of a position and ‘knows’ where the threats loom and where the possibilities lie. The Grand Master is also capable of coming up with a brilliant but highly unorthodox move. This creative aspect of intuition is quite different from a super-fast logical analysis. The crucial difference is that any kind of logical-analytical thought process makes use of existing concepts, which means that it is by definition ‘outdated’. For it to be new, something else is needed. Often it is a question of being able to work with internal *images* rather than rational analysis, for as Jung (1988: 221) says: ‘The primary function of intuition [...] is simply to transmit images, or perceptions of relations between things [...]’. These images have the value of specific insights which have a decisive influence on action whenever intuition is given priority.’ Jung distinguishes different types of individuals, including the ‘intuitive type’ (Briggs-Myers and McCaulley, 1985).

If focusing on examples that actually involve intuition, and in which logical-analytical thinking plays almost no part at all, another important distinction must be made. There is a considerable difference between sudden, intuitive ‘flashes’, brief moments of deeper insight, and a more stable capacity to act on the basis of a deeper knowing, a realization of the larger whole of which the decision in question is only one part. The first seems to overcome us, the second is a skill that we have acquired and that we can consciously call on. Is it possible to develop this more stable form of intuition? The answer seems to be yes, as we will show on the basis of the work of Maslow and Wilber.

**Peak and Plateau Experiences**

Abraham Maslow, who is generally seen as the founder of humanistic psychology, has enriched our culture with deep insights into human existence. Before Maslow made his appearance, psychologists occupied themselves almost exclusively with the ‘psychologically sick’. The definition of ‘psychologically healthy’ was literally ‘not sick’ (Walsh and Shapiro, 1983). Maslow was the first to study individuals who were ‘fully human’ (Maslow, 1971: 24), or to be more precise, people who made full use of their talents, capacities and potentialities (Maslow, 1954: 200). He named them *self-actualizers*: people who are who they are (Maslow, 1954: 201). Maslow discovered that many of these self-actualizers (but also some more ordinary people) had something special in common: the phenomenon that they often experienced flashes of contact with a larger whole (Maslow, 1971: 46)—flashes that were accompanied by feelings of wholeness and love (Maslow, 1954: 235–60). One could say that such ‘peak experiences’ are the prototype of the flashes of deeper insight that we referred to in the previous section.

Cleary and Shapiro (1995) published an article with the intriguing title: ‘The Plateau Experience and the Post Mortem Life: Abraham M. Maslow’s Unfinished Theory’. They describe how in the months before his death, Maslow was reconsidering his theory. At one of the few gatherings he took part in during this period, the Council Grove Conference, he said that he and other ageing people he had spoken to appeared to have fewer peak experiences (Krippner, 1972: 113). He discovered that they had, however, received something that compensated for this loss: the ability to experience that same sense of being joined to a larger whole, but in a more stable, less intense manner. He called this the ‘plateau
experience’. Seen in relation to the metaphor of the peak experience, this calls up an interesting image: you cannot keep standing on top of a peak for long, as you can on a plateau. Six months before his death, on 12 December 1969, Maslow wrote in his diary, in telegram style: ‘Plateau experiences include a quiet, nonorgastic sense of miracle, quiet sacralizing, quiet wonder, gratitude, awe, incredulity, fascination = the quiet peak experiences, more cognitive than emotional’ (Lowry, 1982).

Maslow was not able to elaborate his thoughts on this—and a number of other matters—in the form of a theory. But in 1969 he did publish an article in the newly founded *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (Maslow was in fact one of its founders), in which he indicated that a number of self-actualizers reach the phase of becoming *transcenders* (Maslow, 1969). This means that ‘the self has enlarged to include aspects of the world and that therefore the distinction between self and not-self (outside, other) has been transcended’. He emphasized that in this connection we should be thinking not only of people whose profession is characterized by a spiritual element (clergymen, poets, and other artists), but that in his experience there were just as many transcenders to be found among businessmen, industrialists, managers, educationalists, and politicians.

On account of the unscientific nature of his work, Maslow came in for considerable criticism from established science: most of his work is phenomenological—based on his personal experiences in working with people, and not on systematic empirical research. Others later pointed out that Maslow’s views were keyed to the individual, and that he devoted much less attention to the social environment within which a person develops (Jansen and Wildemeersch, 1998). Maslow himself was the first to admit that a great deal of research was still needed to support and supplement his observations (for that is what they were, not fabrications): ‘I have found that it helps to remove scientific uneasiness about my freewheeling explorations, affirmations, and hypotheses if I am willing to call them prescientific rather than scientific, a word which for so many means verification rather than discovery’ (Maslow, 1971: 286). In his diary, Maslow himself also says that he realizes that there is a great deal of important work to be done, but that he will probably not be able to complete it. He expressed the hope that others would follow who would continue his work. One of them is Ken Wilber.

**Transpersonal Psychology**

Wilber was one of the first researchers to combine data from research into the study of development of children and adults. This led to the view that healthy development is characterized by a step-by-step increase in consciousness, which is related to a development in awareness of the borderline between the ‘I’ and ‘not-I’, as we will explain.

The defining of boundaries is fundamental to the survival of the individual (Polster and Polster, 1973). One important type of boundary is that between what we experience as ‘I’ and what in our experience lies outside the ‘I’.

Someone may, for example, attempt to keep his need for contact with others outside his consciousness (‘repression’), coming to identify himself with his
autonomy (‘I can do it alone’). One characteristic of this phenomenon is the fact that the individual’s repressed need is then often projected outwards, so that he is irritated by others who are in close and intensive contact with one another. Inside an organization, such individuals may stand in the way of cooperative processes.

A manager with a strong tendency to draw a line between the ‘I’ and ‘not-I’ may be insufficiently aware of the synergy within the organization. Learning to accept unconscious patterns as a part of who you are shifts the dividing line between the ‘I’ and ‘not-I’: the unconscious, too, is recognized as a part of who one is.

A fundamental borderline that people encounter in their development is the one between mind and body: here the question is whether you feel that your body is also ‘I’. That is not as simple as it sounds. When feeling the first signs of RSI (repetitive strain injury), our first reaction is often one of annoyance, because our body is preventing us from quickly finishing an important job, almost as if the body is battling the psyche instead of being at one with it. As a result, the pain is often not even felt. Under guidance, the sensation of pain may return, which initially can give people the feeling that they are worse than before the supervision. Generally, a transition from one developmental stage to another is accompanied by a feeling of crisis: such a transition forces the individual to let go of the image that he or she previously had of who and what one is.

Many psychological approaches based on the unity of body and soul (for example, Gestalt therapy) stop at the following boundary, namely that surrounding the individual. Everything inside the circumference of the skin is seen as ‘I’, everything outside is ‘not-I’. During peak experiences, however, the individual is given a glimpse of what lies beyond: for an instant you realize that there is no distinction between what you used to call ‘I’ and the outside world, and this is what makes it a highly intense experience. It may briefly evoke a sensation of fear, comparable to that experienced by someone who in an earlier stage of development wants to withdraw behind a boundary, for example, when beginning to confront his or her own fear of personal contact. The first urge is usually to move away. This is why people may try to banish peak experiences from their consciousness, and become annoyed with others interested in what is then referred to as ‘spirituality’.

Many people are engaged in shifting their I-boundaries beyond their own personality. Those around them often label these transcenders ‘crazy’ or ‘woolly’. It is unfortunate that the New Age movement has only served to reinforce this negative image. There are many examples of cases where its proponents are attempting to push back divisions between the ‘I’ and ‘not-I’, without first going through the development of consciousness related to the earlier stages. This does indeed result in a degree of ‘woolliness’. Wilber (1977, 1979) has argued that healthy psychological development lies in a more gradual development of consciousness, in which the ego boundary is pushed back one step at a time. Once the highest stage of what is commonly seen as ‘normal’ psychological development has been attained, the way is open for so-called transpersonal development. Here, I-awareness is extended beyond the personality previously experienced; the individual is conscious of a kind of oneness with a larger reality (Tart, 1983). This refers to ‘the experience of being part of meaningful wholes, and in harmony with superindividual units such as family, social group, culture and cosmic order’ (Boucouvalas, 1988: 57–8). A term that refers to this phenomenon is interconnected-
ness (Korthagen, 2004: 85). The individual is conscious of the connection or bond between him or herself and other people, and sees a deeper, more fundamental structuring of reality. What first appeared to be a dilemma—for example, on the one hand, concern for the well-being of the people within an organization, and on the other the requirements the product must meet—is suddenly no longer a dilemma. In a flash, one is aware of a connectedness in what at first appeared to be an irreconcilable contradiction. In many cases, the person experiences an intense moment of illumination, in which he or she suddenly understands the true significance of the adversity and reversals encountered during his or her life.

This is accompanied by an awareness of a totally different structuring of reality than the one previously seen (and accepted as the only one), which is reminiscent of the distinction between the implicate and explicate order made by the quantum physicist David Bohm (1980). The explicate order stands for the ordering of reality observed when looking no further than the façade of the world around us. This is what science refers to as objective observation. The implicate order is the deeper ordering observed when able to see the oneness of all things. The term ‘spiritual’ can then be employed more judiciously, having been divested of such connotations as woolly and unscientific. In fact, when capable of seeing the deeper structure of reality, it may become clear that one’s rational thinking actually consisted in ‘making up stories about reality’ (Betty Edwards, quoted in Schwartz, 1995), a phenomenon confirmed by recent neurophysiological research. This research shows that we often devise rational arguments for our behaviour after that behaviour has taken place (see e.g. Damasio, 1999).

Considerable scientific research will be needed to further develop the field of transpersonal psychology. That research could, however, make an important contribution to our existence. What Maslow calls the plateau experience can then be seen as a healthy stage in ongoing human development.

Integration of Intuition and Reflection

We now propose to see intuition as a process taking place within a human being when the I-boundary is (temporarily) extended beyond the personality, and the individual is able to see beyond his or her own ego-restricted thinking. The individual is briefly in contact with a larger whole, and is able to observe the implicate order in things. This may be the true significance of intuition for people in organizations: intuition can help to overcome the illusions of one’s own ego: you can discover which of your ideas and actions are in harmony with the larger whole. This is a humbling experience. At the same time, however, you may also become aware of the special task that you—as an individual—have within that larger whole, for example the organization. A previously vague sense of ‘calling’ may become clearer, and a fresh light may be shed on the fundamental choices you are faced with in your work. When the struggles usually accompanying such choices have been surmounted, this is often accompanied by a sense of being inspired: one is more involved in the work that has to be done—but now with one’s heart.

We believe that, among busy managers, the development sketched here can often stagnate. They may have a vague intuitive sense of what it is they want to
devote themselves to, but it is our experience that often not enough attention is being paid to that inner voice. This may in part be due to the influence of their environment, which often does not take such intuitions seriously, and in any case does nothing to bring them to the surface. Sometimes it is not until a personal crisis develops (through excessive work, perhaps, or a sense of the futility of it all) that people feel compelled to make choices. It is unfortunate, though, that if one is not fully aware of the need to further develop one’s level of consciousness, such choices may be taken without sufficient thought. The individual may, for example, make a radical decision to change jobs, only to discover after a while that the problem has not disappeared.

In working out the insights gained through intuition, reflection can again play an important role, hence we certainly should not discard logical-analytical thinking. On the contrary, we have turned our attention to reflection precisely because it is a core concept in the optimal functioning of people and of organizations. What is important here, however, is finding a better balance between the process of reflection and the process of intuition. In effect, reflection and intuition refer to qualities that complement one another. Ornstein uses a metaphor that may help us to understand these complementary roles. Here, he is discussing the process of designing and building a house:

At first, there may be a sudden inspiration of the gestalt of the finished house, but this image must be brought to completion, slowly, by linear methods, by plans and contracts, and then by the actual construction, sequentially, piece by piece. (Ornstein, 1972: 84)

In our view, the same may be true for organizations: an employee can use intuition to discover the essence of a particular issue, and then use his or her ability to reflect to develop the logical steps which give shape to that intuition. It is not only about being on a spiritual level where you experience the deeper structure of things, but also—and perhaps primarily—about giving shape to what you know intuitively should happen. In other words, going from inspiration to creation.

The Development of Reflective and Intuitive Competencies in Organizations

The theoretical framework outlined has led us to hypothesize that when reflection and intuition are keyed to one another, this may contribute to a better balance within the individual and the organization. The development of reflective and intuitive competencies in relation to one another does, however, require a focused investment in the development of expertise. We are not referring to expertise in a specific field with a specific content, which may be obsolete a few years from now, but rather investment on a meta-level, namely in the capacity for self-steering by means of reflection and intuition. We base our ideas on the results of a professional development course designed on the basis of the theoretical analysis described, a course in which both reflective and intuitive qualities are developed.

This course usually starts with a focus on learning to reflect systematically, using the practical instrument provided by the spiral model of Figure 1. Reflection is not only an individual matter; it also functions within the context of coaching. This means that the participants learn to supervise others while working their way
through the cycle of reflection. This has added advantages, since not only do they learn to reflect autonomously (for example, by keeping a ‘logbook’ in which they systematically reflect on relevant work experiences), they also learn how to coach others in reflection. In this way, the course can contribute to the development of an organizational culture in which team members support one another while systematically learning from their experiences.

The participants in such a course can also experience the difference between solving a problem (phase 4 of the reflection model) by means of simple solutions on the behavioural level, and solutions that are more deeply rooted in oneself or in a realization of the connection between aspects inside and outside the organization. In the latter case, a deepening of reflection will be needed, whereby the concept of intuition emerges quite naturally. During this step, using the model in Figure 2 appears to be helpful.

The strategy used is summarized next. Initially, the trainer supervises the process, but it is the explicit intention to help the participants to become autonomous in working through the various phases of what we call core reflection (Korthagen, 2005; Korthagen and Vasalos, 2005).

First, on the basis of an actual problem, cognitive and emotional contact is made with a personal need or ideal situation (component a of phase 2), and also with

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**Figure 2** The model of core reflection

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**Actualization of core qualities**

*How can these core qualities be mobilized?*

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**Awareness of core qualities**

*What core quality is needed to realize the ideal situation and overcome the limitations?*

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**Experimenting with new behaviour**

*Experience/problematic situation*  
*What problems did you encounter (or are you still encountering?)*

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a. **Awareness of ideal situation**  
*What do/did you want to achieve or create?*

b. **Awareness of limitations**  
(limiting behaviour, feelings, images, beliefs)  
*How were/are you refraining yourself from achieving this?*
the manner in which the person inhibits him or herself in trying to realize that goal (b). The following is an actual example. A middle manager felt the need to learn more about the work being done in other departments. The intended ideal situation was a form of regular exchange between departments. In phase 2, he became aware of his limiting conviction that other departments were already busy enough, and wouldn’t be receptive to the idea. He also became aware that he was showing limiting behaviour by not continuing to inquire about new developments in the other departments (the result of a—limiting—sense of embarrassment). When the individual becomes aware of such inner tensions between the ideal situation and these limitations or inhibitions, he or she can take a step backwards. Important in this step is to not only focus on cognitive insight into this tension, but to develop the attitude of accepting and really feeling the tension; in other words, not to control it (since an attempt at controlling elicits standard patterns of thinking and behaviour). Assagioli (1976: 86) calls this disidentification: one no longer identifies oneself with one’s former manner of dealing with the situation. Next, a question such as ‘what is necessary to resolve that feeling of tension?’ can produce surprising new insights, especially when using the power of imagination. These insights are not imposed, but they come from inside, because the individual is again in touch with often long-neglected core qualities (a term coined by Ofman, 2000; Almaas, 1986, calls them aspects of the personal essence). Examples of core qualities triggered in the middle manager of our example were curiosity, self-confidence, courage, frankness, decisiveness, and creativity (phase 3). Individuals calling on such core qualities can feel very inspired, because they have established a relation with the inspiration they bring to their work, and/or an awareness of the interconnectedness of things. The manager in our example gained a greater realization that his concern seemed to be more than a personal need. He found many indications that there seemed to be a need within the organization as a whole for more synergism, a need that up to then had not been sufficiently recognized.

Another example of this growing sense of interconnectedness (in this case, the interconnectedness of nature), involves a manager who, via phase 1 (dissatisfaction with his work) through phase 3, became aware of the necessity to bring about a more environmentally friendly production process, and came to the realization that this was an important criterion in the production of goods. At the same time, he was able to get in touch with core qualities such as care, interconnectedness, determination, and clarity.

Calling on this deeper awareness in phase 3, and the contact with core qualities, the individual often knows intuitively what to do: one has an inner knowledge of the step one wants to take. We may see this as the development of vision. This means that during the process of ‘core reflection’ (Figure 2), the relationship between reflection and intuition can take shape. The final phase is transforming intuitive insights into real action, through the actualization of the core qualities in concrete situations (phase 4). Here, too, there is ample opportunity to make use of logical-analytical thinking.

The examples given here point up the following important principle: if an individual can act on the basis of a connection between reflection and intuition, he or she may also find that what originally (in phases 1 and 2) seemed to be an individual struggle, is sometimes a form of contact with a process taking place on a
broader level within the organization (or even the world). In this way, personal interests can become keyed to what is needed within a larger whole (e.g. the entire organization). In such instances of core reflection, someone may accept responsibility for his or her own negative feelings (such as anger or disappointment), and may develop the ability to transform these—through contact with his or her core qualities—into a development fruitful for the organization as a whole. This means that core reflection creates the possibility to (re)discover the alignment of personal and organizational needs. Wijnhoven (2001) considers this alignment an important element of organizational learning.

Core reflection can be a self-reinforcing process: we have the experience that, once a deeper contact has been made with other core qualities, such as frankness, decisiveness and curiosity (also mentioned by Ofman), the process of core reflection may proceed more smoothly in later situations. We have observed that it can gradually become part of professionals’ informal learning, that is, the learning taking place outside situations especially created for the enhancement of learning (Eraut, 2000). Tight (2000) emphasizes the importance of this form of learning within organizations.

Here ends our discussion of the approach, and some experiences. We have also started more systematic evaluative research into our approach, which shows that it results not only in more effective behaviours within organizations, but also leads to more job satisfaction (Korthagen and Vasalos, 2005). Until now, the evaluation phase of our research has been based mainly on a careful analysis of concrete cases in which people struggled with a situation for a lengthy period of time, and were then stimulated to use core reflection. In general, the picture is that people experience the re-creation of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) in themselves, and in the people they work with. This finding concurs with recent psychological research (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2002). As soon as people get more into touch with their core qualities, and help others do the same, the way professional interactions are experienced may take a completely different form, as is well described in the following excerpt from a reflective account of one of our respondents:

The genuineness that X [someone he was coaching] showed, his intense longing for room for his way of doing things and his qualities, and the acknowledgement of all this . . . Wow, it evoked a lot in both of us. There was flow.

Although such enthusiastic statements from participants in our courses may be supplemented by many others, we have to emphasize that these are reports on what people say has changed in their work, and not the observations of their behaviour by others. If what they say will be confirmed in follow-up studies into concrete behaviour observed by trained researchers, it may be that an old dream of Maslow’s will become a reality in a training course in which the integration of reflection and intuition has become ‘normal’. He believed that it should be possible ‘to hold classes in miraculousness’ (Krippner, 1972: 114). In particular, we think of the ‘miraculous’ experiences participants in courses on core reflection have had when feeling a renewed inspiration in their work, and seeing its practical effects. On the basis of our first explorations with the promotion of core reflection, we believe that the learning effects are not restricted to feelings of inspiration and flow: increasingly participants in our courses find they know
intuitively how to act in concrete situations previously considered problematic; and they feel an urge to act on this knowing. But all this has to be studied in more depth, also with an eye to differential effects on people with various learning styles or behavioural patterns.

**Conclusions and Discussion**

What does this exploratory study add to Mintzberg’s 1976 article, which we referred to in the introductory section? First of all, we believe that the growing knowledge in the field on issues such as reflection and intuition offers a springboard for understanding that Mintzberg’s two ways of managing may be complementary. Although he already speculated on the importance of an integrative strategy, the present body of knowledge has enabled us to develop such a strategy, and to train professionals in using it in their everyday work, so that it can become part of their formal as well as informal learning. The model of core reflection seems to be helpful in supporting this integration of reflection and intuition in professionals. It is our experience that when whole teams within organizations have developed the capacity for using core reflection and for stimulating each other’s core reflection, this can create a real change in culture compared with the more common tendency to focus on rational analysis. The focus on core qualities often fosters a safe and stimulating work environment (according to Watkins and Marsick, 1993, this is an important condition for developing a learning organization), and a culture in which failures are accepted as a necessary element in learning (something emphasized by Argyris, 1993).

On the other hand, our focus on individual learning is also a limitation. Argyris and Schön (1996) emphasize that individual learning is a necessary but not sufficient condition for organizational learning. Other important conditions are, for example, room for experimentation (Schön, 1983), sufficient connections between different groups within the organization (Hopkins, 2001), and a focus on the development of a joint cognitive framework (Senge et al., 1999; Watkins and Marsick, 1993). This implies that the outcomes of individual learning should be made comprehensible and available to others (Seashore Louis and Kruse, 1998). If such organizational conditions are not being fulfilled, the impact of the core reflection approach on the level of the organization as a whole may remain meagre.

Next we have to emphasize that, in this article, we have only reported on individual cases in which people describe changes in their own behaviours. If we wish to strengthen approaches to organizational learning such as the one described in this article, more research is needed, including studies comparing the effects of the core reflection approach with other approaches to personal effectiveness. Not only with the objective of arriving at final conclusions about effectiveness, but also to further investigate our hypothesis that it is not so much reflection or intuition that is important, but the competence to connect the two in dealing with situations. The important consequence would be that working and learning are no longer two separate things, but that they may become one as soon as people bring reflection and intuition into balance within themselves. In other words, we may then start to doubt both the duality of working and learning, and the duality of reflection and intuition. Perhaps these dualities are no more than
constructions of the mind obstructing organizational effectiveness. As Van den Akker (1999) states, this may in effect be a more important outcome of development research than the mere evaluation of a training intervention. It may help us to question our preconceptions about professional learning, and thus lead to what Senge (1990) calls ‘metanoia’: a fundamental shift of mind facilitating a re-perception of the world and one’s relationship to it.

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