

# **Dialogical Self Approach in management and leadership development.**

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## **Characteristics of the Dialogical Self approach**

This paper presents the dialogical perspective on leadership and management development and Dialogical Self Approach as a methodology applicable in management development based on Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans, 2001).

Leadership and management development explored from the perspective of the Dialogical Self Theory reveals complexity and multiplicity (Voogt, Hermans-Konopka, Hermans, 2010). A manager is involved in a variety of personal and social positions, called I-positions (e.g. I as a leader, I as father, I as a dreamer, I as a protector, I as ambitious, I as artist).

Understanding this *multiplicity*, tensions and dynamism is crucial for the leadership and management development. The dialogical leadership (van Loon, 2003) involves variety of roles (e.g. I as a coach, I as manager), moreover is placed in the context of personal positions (e.g. I as dreamer, I as protector) and can be understood in this context.

## **Personal values and social responsibilities**

Understanding the relations between personal and social positions and including personal values in the leadership is a basis for authentic leadership (Shamir & Eilman, 2005). While many important I-positions are involved or support the leadership, the motivation tends to increase, as resulting from coalitions between positions (Hermans, Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). This integrative motivation can be based on win- win solutions (Nir & Kluger, 2006) within the self of a manager .

## **Exploring the (des-) integration in the Self**

Work with Dialogical Self Approach allows to see management and leadership in the context of the organization of 'I-positions' (Hermans, 2003, Kluger, Nir, Kluger, 2008). Personal (e.g. I as ambitious) and social positions (e.g. I as manager) can be explored and, on the basis of this exploration, developmental directions can be prepared. Not only I-positions themselves but also relations between I-positions, that is, conflicts or inner cooperation (coalitions) among them can be investigated. In the Dialogical Self Approach cooperation between different parts of the self is stimulated what leads to integrative motivation (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Both internal and external positions (e.g. my colleague, my competitor ) are taken into account what allows to see the dynamism of the self in a variety of relations and situations in which a leader functions. An important notion for the management development is a 'promoter position' (Hermans, 2002) which influences and organizes a diversity of other positions, in this way giving an impetus to the development of the self as a whole. We are going to present a case material which

shows the practical possibilities of work in Dialogical Self Approach in executive coaching and training and explains how concepts like promoter position, coalition of positions, I-positions, and third position can be useful in management development programs.

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