

# GYROSCOPIC MANAGEMENT AND GENERATION Y

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## *Abstract*

*In the professional field of business and management there is still little research done on the possibility if the Generation Y members (born between 1980 and 2000), which are the managers off the future, need a different approach in education and training to be prepared for the future. The authors will explain how a new didactical approach in business and management called “Gyroscopic Management” can prepare these new managers to be of added value for the business. This specific approach was the start in 2007 of a specific (international) HRQM Bachelor study programme at Arnhem Business School, HAN University in the Netherlands. During this study programme, students are confronting this specific training and didactical approach with characteristics as self-reliance, self-study, and Socratic dialogue, ethical and “gyroscopic” management. The programme has a clear vision and mission and didactical approach that triggers the above-mentioned elements. The approach focuses on the need for development of specific competencies like “Intercultural adaptability”, “International business awareness” and “Social entrepreneurship” as added to the existing competencies needed for a Bachelor level in business and management education. As researchers, lecturers and trainers, the authors used and researched this approach during many lectures, seminars, trainings and workshops in the last years at Universities in Romania and The Netherlands. The authors present the characteristics of the members of the new Y generation and relate them to main elements of gyroscopic management as practice and the results of this practice for students. For this, the authors did a so-called “Grounded action research”, from 2009 until 2012, among students of business and management studies. Further, the research was supported by focus groups over the same period. The authors have the opinion that this research is important because the new generation of managers seems to need different didactical approaches in education and training that fit better to their characteristics. The authors believe that this research can bring therefore added value to the field of management in the future*

## *Keywords*

*Generation Y, Intercultural Adaptability, International Business Awareness, Social Entrepreneurship, Gyroscopic Management.*

## **I. Introduction**

The idea for this study is a logical continuation of the work experiences of the authors and relates strongly with current functions as researchers and (senior) lecturers at Arnhem Business School (ABS), HAN University, in the Netherlands. Together with colleagues, one of the authors developed, and practises a new approach in teaching and training in higher education in the Netherlands, based on “Gyroscopic Management”. The authors consider this approach as adding to the needed management style for the future generation of managers. The vision behind this belief lies in the value of Human Resource and Quality Management (HRQM) for organizations. A more in detail described explanation for this can be found in earlier publication of the authors in 2011 and 2012. (See list publications. A short overview for the reader is in the next part.

## ***1.2 The state of art of education and training in management and the need for new competencies***

Nowadays most of the studies in management, in higher education in Europe still have, in our opinion and experiences, a strong focus on training participants in being the “controller of policies” and rarely on becoming a “partner” in business for management. Managers have to prove now and in the future that they are of added value for organizations. The new generation of managers will have to be, “partners” and “players” in organizations, helping organizations to reach their goals. Besides that, they have to align themselves as a response to a process of cross-functioning globalization.

## ***1.3 A new generation of managers***

Recent research shows that the field of management is facing the coming years the entrance of a new generation of managers. Quinn, S. (2010) gave in 2010 an overview, which the authors adapted to 2012:

<b>Cohort name: (with also used names)</b>	<b>Birth year</b>	<b>Age in 2012</b>
Veterans (Traditionals)	Born before 1945	67 and above
Boomers (Baby boomers)	Born 1946 – 1964	48 – 66
Generation X (Baby busters)	Born 1965 – 1976	36 – 47
Generation Y (NetGen, Millenials, Facebook gen)	Born 1977 – 1997	15 – 35
9/11 (GenNext, Gen Z)	Born after 1998	14 and under

**Figure 1. The generations (Quinn, S, 2010) (adapted by the authors to 2012)**

Figure 1 shows that generation Y will be entering the business. Because the literature in this new field is very new and divers, the authors did extended literature research and formulated on the base of different authors (see list of publications) some common characteristics for this generation. As authors, we are fully aware that we generalize in this. However, we also believe that this gives insight in important elements for this study for our target group.

## ***1.4 The generation Y***

These “new” managers are just entering the organizations or preparing that and are also called “Millennials” or “Facebook-generation”. Organizations already focus on them because they cannot ignore the needs, desires, and attitudes of this new generation. The members of this generation have the following common generalized characteristics: Tech-savvy, family based, achievement-oriented, team-oriented and attention-searching. They are seeking for different and creative challenges, personal growth, meaningful careers and are in need for supervisors, coaches, and mentors. They want to approach problems in new and innovative ways. Moreover, they want to be more “players”. This is a much-overlooked value and to make better use of this, the authors believe that trainers and educators need to become more innovative themselves. One of the most important characteristic of the Generation Y members seems to be that they are more “out-of-the-box” thinkers. (Kovary & Buahene: 2011). The gyroscopic management approach adapts towards the preparation and education for that new group of managers and can support educators and trainers. However, the majority of educators and trainers are of other generations and adapting to this new approach has already proven to be a very big challenge.

## **II. Preliminary research**

### ***2.1 The study programme HRQM***

Some of the answers for this needed change of roles for managers are, according to the authors, already given practised in the international study programme “HRQM” at ABS in The Netherlands. Added to the Dutch Bachelor Study (BBA) programme in Business and management Studies (BMS), this programme is in English and has a strong focus on additional and important competencies like: “International Business Awareness”, “Intercultural

Adaptability” and (social) “entrepreneurship”. These competencies already have proven to be needed extra competencies for the “new generation of managers” to become ‘players’ and entrepreneurs in business.

## **2.2 A change in didactical approach**

The program also had a change in the didactical approach, which was based on an experiment, some years ago at Arnhem Business School (ABS) in which separated disciplines like HRM, Quality Management, Communication, and Business Ethics were integrated in one common lecture. This was done to get a new integrated perspective, in combination with a ‘systems-thinking’ style. In short, it means that the authors, in their gyroscopic approach, in which the authors took the metaphor of a turning “gyroscope” (see earlier publications), as trainers or lecturers; do not pretend to be able to give the answers to any management oriented problem, because this would “stop” the turning gyroscope. This “not answering approach”, creates the opportunity for the participants to constantly, find a new balance themselves. It is obvious that this does not always take place in a secure environment. In preparing participants for their professional career, this creates, on purpose, situations and atmospheres that reflect this professional field. This does not feel like a secure environment, especially from the point of view of participants. To re-create this business environment we do things the participant does not expect and we get their “gyroscopes” to start. This change can be as mentioned by Johansen (2004) *“an exhilarating experience”*. In an applied research, the authors have looked at the actions and results that the approach brings to participants, educated and trained with this “gyroscopic management’ approach. We will explain this research in short in the following part.

## **III. Research**

### **3.1 Motivation and scientific context**

The motivation for the choice of a special applied research method, called “Grounded Action”, started with the general interest in the following field: *“Students at business schools that are achieving the change in their role from being a “student” to being a “professional” in business.”* The authors believe that during this change the business roles as mentioned in the first part (policy controller, partner and player) are developing and that there is no clear way to understand what goes on in the students during this change. The approach and research of this field of interest was done in an inductive way, using own experiences, and practice in education in The Netherlands and Romania and making use of the research method called “Grounded Action” (Simmons & Gregory, 2003). This inductive research method, suits the content and context of “gyroscopic management” in a perfect way. Based on Glaser’s opinion that *“All is data”* (Glaser: 1967), the core variables of “Gyroscopic management” were gathered and grounded during several years and presented in an explanatory theory that is formulated in the following way: *“The actual change of role from being a “student” toward being a “professional” consists of five stages. These are: listening, awareness, accepting, adapting, and advancing”* This led to the next step in which this theory was translated into a so-called “operational theory”, which, according to Simmons & Gregory (2003), is needed for a “Grounded Action” methodology. In this part, the authors explain and describe in which way the stages, given in the explanatory theory can occur or take place in practise. The whole research included inductive sampling of data in the form of reflections, interviews, and observations, video and audio taping, memoing, evaluations, and field notes in a large database. The database consists of around 1000 written (and digitalized) evaluation forms, reading of more than 1500 written reflections, transcribed interviews, research papers and material from focus groups and more than 200 hours of taped audio and video material. Because the authors are aware that they have a very subjective and direct participation in this research, they also made use of focus groups as a program evaluation method. They used for this the criteria as given by Morgan & Krueger (1993) and the aim was to

evaluate and “test” the subjective view of the authors of the explanatory theory and conceptual framework. The groups tested and evaluated both in inductive and deductive ways the explanatory theory with the given data, the operational theory and the target groups. All focus groups did their research in 2011 and 2012 and came with results in separate research papers.

#### **IV. Conclusions**

##### ***4.1 The added value of Gyroscopic Management for the field of management***

It is not the intention of the authors to define in this paper, in detail all competencies that the new generation of managers need for the future. The aim is more to focus on the attitude and different competencies that there are between the “executive” professional and the “improvising” professional. This difference is explained as follow: “The need for control from the “executive” professional is a stumbling block to creatively solving problems. There is not much willingness to listen and to explore new or unexpected outcomes.” (Sabouring & Pratt, 2007)

These authors mention the need for more “Improvising” professionals and many of the missing competencies in trainings and lectures are, according to literature of several authors (see list of publication), related to the parts like: listening, awareness, accepting, narrating, and adapting. The authors believe that gyroscopic management covers all these elements and supports participants in becoming more “improvising” professionals, which the authors define as “players

##### ***4.2 The relation between the “new” generation of managers and gyroscopic management***

The results of the literature study and research show that the stages of gyroscopic management are individual different and have no real order or structure in the five stages. There are connections between the stages, but it is not always clear which specific following stage or occurrence the participant will enter. Participants make own choices and many of them experience derailing parts in the stages, bringing them back to other levels or stages. The authors do not aim to find a specific and clear structure to implement as the “right way” to train and lecture the new generation Y managers. There is more a focus on recognizing and admitting that it is the “power” and purpose of a constant turning “gyroscope” to find balance, by unbalancing. Schofield & Honeré (2010) wrote an article about their research on the learning characteristics of generation Y, the following: “*Generation Y may be missing out on exploring more deeply, enquiry and reflection. They struggle more than previous generations with ‘difficult workplace conversations’ and they need more support in becoming self-aware.*” (Schofield & Honeré: 2010). The new managers in the generation Y want independence to decide on their own. They do not need authority, existing models or theories to approach problems and situation. They want supervising and coaching, but not by experts that tell them “how” to do it or that explains them “what” to do. They need feedback that stimulates them to come with own different and innovative ideas. Besides that, they want to be self-managers. In the approach of gyroscopic management, this is asking the “why!”

##### ***4.3 Preliminary outcomes of the research***

The literature research and studies and the action based Grounded Action research done in Romania and The Netherlands shows some interesting outcomes as given by the participants themselves:

- “It is different and unexpected”
- “It uses the present situation and makes it real”
- “It is fun because there are many games involved”
- “It is very interactive”
- “It makes clear that making mistakes is part of learning and can be fun”
- “It is about “playing to play” instead of “playing to win””
- “It uses interactive methods like role-playing and improvising acting”

- “It is not based on theory, but it is still clearly related with it”
  - “There is no clear structure for training; mostly there is only a “theme”.
  - “The relation between the use of games becomes clear during and after the courses”
- These remarks are individual reflections of participants during and after the trainings with the use of gyroscopic management. The authors come to the following preliminary conclusions.
- Participants experience the approach as, not pushing but more “pulling” giving full responsibility for the learning to the participants themselves.
  - Participants recognize and are aware that they show the five stages as given in the explanatory theory, listening, awareness, accepting, adapting, and advancing
  - During the action-based research, participants showed the occurrences as mentioned in first three stages of the operational theory: listening, awareness and accepting stage.
  - In their reflections, participants show already the stages of accepting and adapting after some training. (On average after 5-10).
  - The content of the training and the working of the gyroscopic approach are a lot depending on the approach of the trainer.

These preliminary conclusions show that “gyroscopic management” is a different approach towards the ‘new’ generation of managers for the future. The authors do not have the pretention to say this is “right” way to approach them. It only show a different way and the authors believe that this approach can be of added value for the professional field of business and management in the future.

Arnhem, April 2012.

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