Methodological and Ideological Options

Building Sustainability on Deep Values Through Mindfulness Nurturing☆

Estrella Bernal[a,*], David Edgar[b], Bernard Burnes[c]

[a] Human Resources Management, Business and Economics Faculty, Campus Río Ebro, Zaragoza University, Room D-1.07, María de Luna s/n, Zaragoza 50018, Spain
[b] Strategy and Business Transformation, Department of Management, Glasgow School for Business and Society, Glasgow Caledonian University, Cowcaddens Road, Glasgow, Scotland G4 0BA, UK
[c] Stirling Management School, Room number: 3A17, Cottrell Building, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA, Scotland, UK

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ABSTRACT

To effectively pursue sustainability, companies need to develop an awareness of the importance of social and environmental objectives in addition to economic. To achieve this, they need to promote a set of shared values in their strategy and cultural change which align global sustainability with organisational performance. To assist organisations with this process and thus identify and nurture their members' underpinning values, we present the *Organisational Presence Model* including a Real Dialogue Methodology. We draw on Lewin's participative approach to change and the deep concept of Mindfulness related to Buddhist precepts, while contributing with a way to initiate Mindfulness Nurturing in business context, facilitating its acceptance and practice by organisational members. In our study case we find signs of positive effects of the model in sustainability pursuing. The new strategy has been built aligned with resulting values, that are also perceived by organisational members as inspirational, generating motivation and helping the effective communication that integrates the strategic objectives in the economic, social and environmental aspects.

1. Introduction

Many definitions of sustainability exist; however, there is general consensus that definitions should include biophysical and human aspects. Works by Bernal and Zografos (2012) and Mabsout (2015) use a comprehensive approach of human being as an individual who interacts with the environment and with other human beings in broader terms, rather than mere competition. In this way, individual wellbeing depends on social wellbeing (including harmonious social relations, where diversity of world views is respected) and on the good condition of the environment.

In agreeing with this approach, any organisation wanting to contribute to global sustainability should be concerned not just with economic performance, but also with its social and environmental performance. Such concern firstly implies being aware of the relations and impacts that the organisation has within society and the environment, considering organisational members as part of both the inner society (e.g. organisation) and wider global society. So there are two key questions that will lead our research: how to develop the awareness of these existent relations and impacts? And how to develop a culture related to this awareness that allows the organisation to make decisions while harmonising the three realms of its sustainable performance for business excellence: economic, social and environmental?

Issues of sustainability are perceived as interwoven with the development of an organisation's strategy and the implementation of the changes required realising it. Indeed, Dunphy et al. (2007) argue that organisations have a greater part to play in achieving environmental sustainability than either governments or consumers.

For many writers, the key issue to achieve successful organisational change is one of value system alignment (Burnes and Jackson, 2011). In organisational terms, values occur at three levels: the organisational level, as part of its culture, the work group level, as part of its subculture, and the individual level, i.e. their own personal values (Cummings and Worley, 2015; Schein, 2010). The importance of values is that they influence behaviour, especially in terms of whether organisational goals and action are judged as right and appropriate in a given situation (Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984; Burnes, 2014; Denison and Spreitzer, 1991; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004; Neves and Caetano, 2009). Employees who see that a proposed change intervention and the way it is managed is congruent with their own values, their work group's values and the wider organisational values are more likely to be committed to its success than those individuals who perceive a clash of values (Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984; Chonko et al., 2002; Diefenbach, 2007; Mrotek, 2001; Neves and Caetano, 2009; Walinga, 2008). It

follows that when organisations are attempting to promote global sustainability as an approach to business excellence, they are in effect addressing and attempting to change what those in the organisation consider to be the values with which people can commit themselves to. In order to do so, they need to understand the values which underpin people's beliefs and ensure that their organisation has or can adopt values which align with sustainability and these beliefs. However this cannot be done by imposition, since people will only address and change their values if they are allowed to do so freely and through open participation (Burnes and By, 2012).

So the problem we try to address is how to face the change needed in strategies of the organisations seeking to pursue global sustainability as an approach to excellence.

We believe that the model we will propose can assist organisations in facing such change.

As a first step of the model, we developed a methodology which acted as a framework for assisting managers of an industrial company in identifying their underpinning values and understanding them as a base for cultural and strategic change. This can be extrapolated to other organisational context.

2. A Proposed Model of Organisational Presence to Pursue Global Sustainability

2.1. Organisational Values and Change

In terms of organisational change, it is argued that the values embodied in the type of change, e.g. cutting jobs or enhancing skills, and way that it is managed, e.g. imposed or participative, also need to be aligned with the organisational, work group and individual values of those concerned (Burnes and Jackson, 2011).

Kurt Lewin in the 1940s is generally seen as the first person to draw attention to the relationship between value alignment and successful change (Benne, 1976). Lewin recognised that change often creates instability, which can lead to resistance if change challenged existing values (Burnes, 2007). However, Lewin's approach to change, which is based on change participants learning about themselves, their current situation and what needs to change, offers not only a way of avoiding resistance but also of addressing the issue of how to identify current and develop new values (Burnes, 2004).

Lewin developed an ethical-participative approach to change that has proved remarkably robust (Burnes and By, 2012; Burnes and Jackson, 2011). Ethics deals with 'how humans treat other beings so as to promote mutual welfare, growth, creativity, and to build a shared meaning and to strive for what is good over what is bad and what is right over what is wrong' (Thiroux and Krasemann, 2007:27). Lewin did not believe that people could be tricked or coerced into change instead he believed that they would only fully commit to change if they saw it as right in the circumstances. He argued that behavioural change is most successful if individuals and groups are given the opportunity to reflect on and learn about their own situation, and change of their own volition (Burnes, 2004; Lewin, 1947).

Nevertheless, though Lewin's work to change makes it an appropriate foundation on which to build an ethical approach to change, by itself it does not fully address the issue of how to bring about change when individual, group and/or organisational values are not aligned. This was because when Lewin died he had not fully developed significant research areas, such as value alignment (Burnes and Cooke, 2012). Therefore in the next section, we propose to link Lewin's work to the concepts of Mindfulness and Presence as a means of aligning values with proposed changes and a deeper sense of ethics.

To summarise, there is support for the view that successful change is associated with the value alignment of three factors: the values of those involved in the change intervention, the objective of the intervention (in our case contributing to global sustainability) and the approach to change (i.e. the values underpinning the content of the change and the

process by which it is managed). If the concept of value alignment is valid, then it is not sufficient for organisations to ensure that the objective of the change intervention is congruent with the organisation's values; they would also need to ensure that the approach to change adopted is congruent. Research by Burnes and Jackson (2011) shows that this is a valid proposition and one which does lead to successful change. However, what about cases where there is not alignment between those involved in the change intervention and the objective of the intervention? In such a situation, what is required is not an approach to change which is aligned with either the people or the objective, but an approach which can ethically create alignment between these two. In this instance, we need an approach to change which can create value alignment between the organisation's values (i.e. its members' values) and the values which lie at the heart of our objective which is the search for sustainability.

2.2. Mindfulness, Presence and Deep Values

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhism, but was brought to Occident by Dr. Kabat Zinn mainly with the objective of stress and pain reduction. Mindfulness means "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994:4).

Many studies (Byron et al., 2015; Crane and Kuyken, 2013; Dariotis et al., 2016; Foukal et al., 2016; Harris et al., 2016; Jha et al., 2017; Klatt et al., 2017; Malinowski and Lim, 2015; Mann et al., 2016; Reb et al., 2017; Russell et al., 2016; Schussler et al., 2016; Sharp and Jennings, 2016; Verdorfer et al., 2014; Zemestani and Ottaviani, 2016) show that Mindfulness works not only when different aims are pursued in different spheres of society, health and education systems, but also in corporations. In particular as Van Gordon et al. (2016, p:78) show, in the work place *"mindfulness has been shown to lead to significant improvements in employee mental health outcomes, including anxiety (…), depression (…), stress (…), burnout (…), sleep quality (…), and dispositional mindfulness (…). Mindfulness has also been shown to improve employee physical health outcomes (…,. Furthermore, mindfulness in the workplace has been linked to job performance in various ways, including (i) client-centered empathic care in health-care professionals (…), (ii) positive organisational behavior (…), (iii) organisational innovativeness and performance (…), and (iv) work-related self-efficacy."*

We agree with Van Gordon et al. (2016:78) when they state that "*contemporary mindfulness as it is operationalized in mindfulness-based interventions such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (…), does not always meet the traditional Buddhist criteria for authentic mindfulness*". In effect, meditation in the original Buddhism source should not have any specific aim, nor purpose for the life, it is instead a transcending way of continuous self-inquiry to discover the authentic essence of the self-human nature, which is conceptually a mystery and cannot be put into words, but can only be experienced by the meditator and tested by the master as the meditator's real experience.

Mindfulness as originally contributed by Kabat Zinn is more akin to a sort of therapy to improve health and other times as a form of training to develop certain personal skills or competences. While it can be used in business, or to enhance learning capability as in education, it always pursues a certain aim, while not always involve an ethical or inner commitment of the meditator of self-enquiry or with contribution to the collective, or any other aspect that transcends the selfhood. In this sense, an Authentic Mindfulness having its roots in Buddhism is a transcending way of self-enquiry in the authentic essential nature of human being that is empty from any particular objective for life. In other words, an authentic meditator longs for transcending selfhood by perceiving his/her real inner human nature but not for any particular reason (e.g. more powerful, wiser or any personal wish).

However while authentic transcending meditators don't have any particular aim, the fact is that meditation improves many personal capabilities, as Van Gordon et al. (2016:79) show with the promising