

UNIVERSAL VALUES: IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

Based on the wisdom of noted visionaries, this paper discusses key insights into the values and principles essential to developing sustainability. The business sector today has risen to being considered the most powerful sector of society. Therefore, large corporations particularly are slowly realizing that WITH this powerful position comes new responsibilities, meaning the need to take responsibility for “the whole” (ecological, social aspects) in addition to their present objective of optimizing shareholder profit. This paper can place conference participants in the forefront of management education thinking by providing new insights into sustainable values and principles essential for future management teaching.

Keywords: Values, sustainability, management education, business

INTRODUCTION

Presently we are experiencing continuous deterioration related to ecological issues as well as worrisome challenges in social and economic sectors. This has an important impact on all sectors including especially business management, governments and education in general.

It is now acknowledged that the business sector (especially large corporate businesses) is the most powerful sector in society (Harman 1998, Chaudhry, 2011), and it has the most powerful influence of any sector related to how governments act and react, and as a result how society is affected.

Until recently, business has had basically only one main responsibility ----the optimizing of shareholder profits. This has meant that businesses have NOT been aware or concerned about their rapidly developing new power base in society. However, now many senior CEOs and business managers are becoming aware that they need to rethink their role in society. This

involves taking on new responsibilities, commensurate with their key position of power and influence in how a country is able to develop and flourish.

This new responsibility of the business sector involves “responsibility for the whole”, which includes ecological, social and economic CONSEQUENCES of their actions. That means a whole transformation in business management thinking and actions to reflect this new position of business management in society.

Business today is being challenged as never before to reinvent itself and to come up with viable solutions that can help especially business management to reinvent itself. This new position will require business management to take seriously its new responsibilities commensurate with its power and influence for the business sector.

As a direct result, management education urgently needs to become “part of the solution” rather than continue with existing programs that would make business education a major contributor to the problems we currently face.

This new position in society demands a transformation in how we view the role of management and how this directly affects management teaching and education in general (Orr, 2001). This new position of education in society affects everyone at the very core of management thinking – our values foundation.

To prepare ourselves for this transformation in thinking, we should be reminded of one important fact: In business teaching, we pass on to the students our own VALUES. These were shaped during our own educational experience. This is a huge challenge because we may not be aware of this happening, and especially today, because we need go through the process of rethinking our own values and principles that form the foundation of all business management education.

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION

What are the major new challenges for management education? There are many, but the following 3 appear to be paramount and have deep meaning for all management education.

- a) New responsibilities for business-----moving from one dimensional “maximizing of profits” towards multidimensional responsibility for “the common

good”, that involves a balancing of all three aspects of the bottom line (ecological, social, economic).

b) Changes in values and principles ----taking into account the new responsibility for the “common good”, (genuine triple bottom line) including emphasis on LONG TERM planning.

c) Business schools teaching programs --- rethinking the overall program objectives to reflect the expanded role of business in society.

VISIONARIES

Our first step in these challenges requires us to examine the “wisdom of visionaries”, to benefit from their insight into our challenges today. Many visionaries have for some time been aware of the coming changes in business management thinking (values) that are essential for the needs of the 21st Century. Following are examples from highly respected well known visionaries:

“We cannot solve our problems by using the same kind of thinking (values) that created them”. (Einstein, Calaprice on Einstein, 2000).

“ We are attempting to cope with the conditions of the 21st Century with the thinking of the 20th Century”. (Laszlo 2001, 2009).

What seems to be the key to bringing about this change in business education?

The following quotes point clearly to the need to satisfy our “inner” human needs (values) as well as our “outer” needs in business and management education.

“The key step to our bringing about change is eschewing the negative vision (purely objective, positivistic thinking) ...and choosing a vision that benefits our inner purpose and that of those around us.” (Harman, 1998).

“That which cannot be observed or measured, such as spirit and consciousness, came to be excluded from consideration by science (objective thinking).....and therefore from the scientific perspective, does not exist.” (Korten, 1999).

“ The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious.....He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.” (Einstein, Calaprice on Einstein 2000).

Related to a new way of thinking (new values) in business education, controversy exists between the outer objective quantitative aspects and the inner qualitative aspects (McGilchrist, 2011). A combination of both are NOW considered essential for new thinking (values) in business education.

“The purely quantitative approach (objective thinking) misses out on everything that matters (for humanity).” (Schumacher, 1997).

“The Western neglect of the realm of the subjective (inner) experience has had serious consequences in our confusion about values. For it is ultimately in the realm of the subjective (our consciousness), the transcendent, and the spiritual that all societies have found the basis for the deepest values, commitments and sense of meaning.” (Harman, 1998).

“Values and beliefs determine the ways we perceive the world and suggest the ways we prioritize the responses to our perceptions. They affect almost all areas of our judgment and behavior”. (Laszlo 2001).

To summarize this new approach to management, it appears management teaching programs now need to take seriously this newly recognized human capacity (inner wisdom, consciousness). This capacity apparently we all have, but has been left dormant in the Western world particularly for many decades, and is increasingly viewed as a key to solving the new challenges in business of dealing sustainably with the triple bottom line---ecological, social and economic.

This change, in terms of program objectives and planning will now need to take into account two aspects of thinking -----both conventional objective as well as subjective (consciousness) wisdom. This will affect all management teaching programs in business.

UNIVERSAL VALUES: NEW FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

This new approach to management education begins with a new foundation on which the teaching objectives and program planning are based: What are the values that form a new foundation of education for Sustainability in businesses?

Researchers have been working on this new values foundation for Sustainability in business and society for several years. The United Nations Earth Charter (1997), as well as other international documents form the basis for these values and resulting principles. This values foundation is especially needed NOW as the business sector is beginning to accept genuine new responsibilities for the triple bottom line-----ecological, social and economic. It appears clear that business can no longer exist on respecting only a one dimensional responsibility.

Business management education is particularly studying these universal values carefully as it affects directly the teaching and practice of all aspects of business management and education. These values reflect a combination of BOTH objective and subjective thinking and are therefore considered sustainable for all business. Following is found a brief outline of some of the most important universal values, followed by the principles associated with these values. (Kras, 2007).

Universal Values

These values are divided into 3 interrelated aspects: Values related to the Self; values related to family, community, work; values related to Nature and Outer Space.

Values related to Self: (Kras, 2007)

- *Love:* includes our respect for and appreciation of all humans. Connected with love we find compassion, kindness, generosity, forgiveness, joy.
- *Respect:* This includes respect for oneself, as well as respect for others.
- *Honesty, Trust:* We cannot have trust without honesty, nor honesty without trust.
- *Non-Violence:* This refers to non-violence in thoughts, attitudes, behaviours, as it applies to business and utilizes dialogue to handle differences (Gandhi, 2006).

- *Humility*: Usually considered a weakness in western business. Humility is considered a positive value. This includes the need for top quality education as a basis for understanding the strength of humility.
- *Service*: We all need to give of ourselves, to help others, without expecting anything in return. Both the givers and receivers benefit personally when thinking and acting sustainably.

Values related to Family, Community, Work (Kras, 2007)

This value is broad and is associated strongly with the values related to Self. It considers family preparation as a key to a happy experience in the community and the working world. Schumacher (Schumacher, 1997) summarized the importance of work for the average person: He indicated that the average person wants:

“to be creatively productive, to render service, act in accordance with our moral impulses”.

Values related to Nature and Outer Space: (Kras, 2007)

Human existence on Earth would not be possible without Nature. Simply to stay alive we need WATER, SOIL and AIR. All human existence is thus closely dependent on and interconnected with Nature and Outer Space. When we damage this life line, we are also affecting ourselves, as well as the existence of our future families and all life on Earth.

PRINCIPLES

For renewed business teaching objectives and planning, all the principles listed below are related to and dependent upon the universal values listed above. A brief summary follows of some of the most important principles that will affect the teaching of business management for Sustainability (the triple bottom line in practice).

Ecological Principles: (Kras, 2007)

- 1) **Harmony and Balance**: This principle is affected by universal values related directly to our combined objective/subjective thinking that is needed for a sustainable triple bottom line. This includes the necessary new balance needed for ecological and socio-cultural realities in addition to economic aspects.
- 2) **Long term planning in business**: Based on Nature’s long term plan.

- 3) Earth is a living system: All life on Earth, including human life, is dependent on the Living natural interconnected systems of Earth.
- 4) Commitment: To protect, conserve and restore damage by humanity.
- 5) Precautionary Principle: We are limited in our knowledge of Nature, and hence need Precaution as an important part of all activities.
- 6) Renewable resources: usage based on corresponding renewal capacities of Nature.
- 7) Biodiversity: A natural state, and we need to understand and conserve biodiversity.
- 8) Integrated thinking: This includes the need to understand how human activity in economic areas are integrated with and directly affect other key functions, such as ecological and social.
- 9) Polluter pays: Businesses that pollute need to understand their full responsibility to restore.

Social Principles: (Kras, 2007; Maslow, 1968)

- 1) Humans have inherent goodness: All humans have, by nature, universal values in common, but how these are manifest depends on positive human development.
- 2) Right to equitable use of natural resources: This principle holds for all sectors.
- 3) Respect for Diversity: This includes cultures, tastes, countries etc. Diversity respects and strengthens all aspects of business management.
- 4) Equality of opportunity for all, in spite of economic, ecological or social differences.
- 5) Tolerance and non-violence: In thoughts, attitudes, behaviors, practices.
- 6) Social and economic justice for all.
- 7) Work has intrinsic value.
- 8) Education is life long.

Economic Principles: (Kras, 2007)

- 1) Main objective: quality of life---- overall human well being (in harmony with Nature, social and economic needs).
- 2) Long term development of Key importance: Must be equitable and planned according to Nature's schedule.
- 3) Institutions, individual managers and decision makers: democratic, accountable, transparent.
- 4) Integration: Balanced carefully amongst economic, ecological and social needs.

- 5) Distinct Societal groups are needed: Each group, such as business, government, education, etc. each have distinct roles and responsibilities in society. No individual group dominates others.
- 6) Progress: Measured by Quality of Life: Progress emphasizes relationships. Economic progress restricted to meeting basic needs in life.
- 7) Trade: Balance between local, national and international, with most importance attached to local and national.
- 8) Money: A tool for exchange purposes, not a commodity for trade.
- 9) Economic sector: a subsystem of and dependent upon whole Earth ecological system.
- 10) Development: Based on balance of all 3 “bottom line” sustainable requirements.
- 11) Equitable wealth distribution: refers especially to natural resources as the main “wealth”.
- 12) Cooperation: Use of cooperation and dialogue to resolve differences.(non-violence).

COMPARISON CHART: CONVENTIONAL and SUSTAINABLE THINKING

The previous sections, Sustainable Values and Sustainable Principles, have basically laid a new foundation for SUSTAINABLE THINKING in MANAGEMENT EDUCATION. In the following simplified comparison are highlighting a few key items that demonstrate some of the main differences between our present conventional approach to management and the new realities of a sustainable approach to teaching business management.

CONVENTIONAL THINKING	SUSTAINABLE THINKING
1. Strong Individualism -----	Whole system collective concerns
2. Strong Personal Ego -----	Personal humility
3. Win/lose outlook -----	Win/win outlook
4. Vision: short term -----	Vision long term
5. Linear thinking -----	Integrated thinking
6. Economic priority-----	Balanced priorities
(all others externalities)	(all internalities)

COMPARISON PROFILES: SUSTAINABLE and CONVENTIONAL

Profile—Strong Conventional Thinking (Kras & Ryan, 2011)

To consider a viable approach to our present day challenges means that we need to better understand our present HUMAN thinking about life and the business world. This following

brief profile provides a general depiction of conventional western world thinking at the turn of the 21st century. It is hoped that this brief description of western thinking will provide insight into some “strong conventional thinking” that exists today in the business sector.

This brief profile summary of a strong conventional thinker today is a starting point in the process of reflecting on what we ourselves genuinely believe in, our values and principles in life, studies, and work that affect us every day, as well as the natural environment surrounding us.

The strong conventional thinker believes that:

- (i) Our highly developed objective mind (which has resulted in incredible scientific technological feats) with our rational intellectual thinking is paramount in our lives, studies, and work, and the rational mind will be capable of eventually solving all our problems.
- (ii) The concept of happiness in life, including business studies and work, depends on money and the pleasure related to acquiring “things”. The motivation in studies is to find work and to earn money to buy more things, which in turn provides us with an image in society of success, status, power, control and happiness. Happiness and success in life is interpreted in financial terms. Life involves pride in one’s capacity to earn as much money as possible and to show our success through owning things.
- (iii) Strong individualism should be encouraged, and humans by nature are considered competitive, self centered, greedy and often jealous of others who have more things or better positions where they earn more money. There is pressure “to get there first”, no matter what the consequences are for others. Individualism is considered a natural and valued human attribute. We have a number of rights which we expect society to give us, but often disregard or forget the responsibilities that accompany these rights. We are considered “architects” of our own success and life in general. Our trust and responsibility rests basically within ourselves. We live in a world of winners and losers and we naturally feel anger and sometimes fear if we are in danger of losing.
- (iv) Nature is separate from humans and is free for us to manipulate according to our needs and desires. Nature has predictable laws which we eventually will understand through science and the rational mind. Other beliefs related to spirituality are considered a personal choice, but do not belong in the world controlled by science.

- (v) Science and spirituality (in its broad sense) are separate worlds, and only scientific knowledge has credibility in society.

The previous five beliefs are mostly still being taught in educational institutions, at home, in work situations (including large companies), in the media, by governments at all levels and even in universities. Most of these beliefs will appear familiar, even though as individuals we do not necessarily agree with all of them. They are also widespread in the world, especially in the regions and countries which have embraced modern industrialization, and the power of the conventional thinking behind our modern science and technology. At a societal level these beliefs have in many respects reached the status of being deeply held “truths” that are rarely questioned.

Profile—Emerging Strong Sustainable Thinker (Kras & Ryan, 2011)

It is proposed that sustainability requires these “undisputable” truths described above to be not just challenged, but also modified. We need to look at these beliefs to understand some of the challenges they are creating, and which of our personal beliefs need to be reexamined, and which ones will need to be replaced by other deeper beliefs that can create a positive outcome. This is not an easy task, but the education sector in general is considered vital as a strong influence in forming young minds for the future. Therefore, business management students at all levels are vital to being leaders in this process, as it is a group that is flexible in thinking. It is also the group that will be living and working in a society which will require much deep fundamental change in thinking from that which existed for their parent’s generation.

In contrast to the present day conventional thinker described above is the “emerging sustainable thinker”. The emerging “strong sustainable thinker” believes that:

- (i) Our objective thinking is extremely important to our future, but it alone will not be enough to solve our problems. We must also develop a deeper level of understanding of our higher consciousness in order to draw from the wisdom we hold within, to really understand the depth of what is happening in our world. As Willis Harman (Harman, 1998) has indicated in his book, *Global Mind Change*, we are experiencing a deeper seated human “malady”, which we need to treat before we can hope to solve our Earth related problems.

- (ii) Genuine happiness and fulfillment in life, business studies and work, our inner sense of peace, and our genuine good relations with other humans can only be achieved if we learn to access and use our higher consciousness, in addition to our objective mind. This means in everyday life (and studies) that “wants” change to “needs”, and the acquiring of things loses its importance as a measure of our worth and status. A certain amount of income is needed for basic needs, but money as such is not a measurement of success and progress. Quality in life rather than quantity in life becomes the new measurement of success and happiness.
- (iii) Humans are cooperative by nature, and will try to use dialogue when differences occur. This means a change in personal relationships. That is, it shows genuine concern for other human beings, in families, in educational institutions and communities where we live and work.
- (iv) Success and happiness is measured in these human relationships, and is a person who shows basic self respect, as well as a high respect for all living creatures.
- (v) We are part of Nature and therefore interconnected with Nature, on which we depend for life. We also have the capacity for higher consciousness, which provides fulfillment in life, studies and work, as well as peace of mind which is a huge help when problems arise, as well as a deep level of courage to live through them.
- (vi) We are a responsible caretaker of our Earth, and are aware that if we do not look after the Earth, our time here is limited. Nature will eventually get rid of us.
- (vii) We are dependent on Nature for our lives here on Earth, and we need to direct all our efforts towards protecting our natural environment, its services and resources, for our future generations to have an opportunity to live as well.

It now appears more convincing every day that business teaching and related activities, based on sustainable thinking is already producing some positive results in few areas of the real world. There is slowly appearing a direct connection between sustainable thinking and values and the possibility for a positive future for us all, no matter what our present activity ---in business studies, our work, our communities, and governments.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT CHART

HOW TO REACH THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

The following comparison chart provides a simple OUTLINE FOR BUSINESS EDUCATORS. The fundamental differences between a CONVENTIONAL one dimensional approach to business management on the one hand and the 3 dimensional SUSTAINABLE bottom line approach on the other are clearly in view.

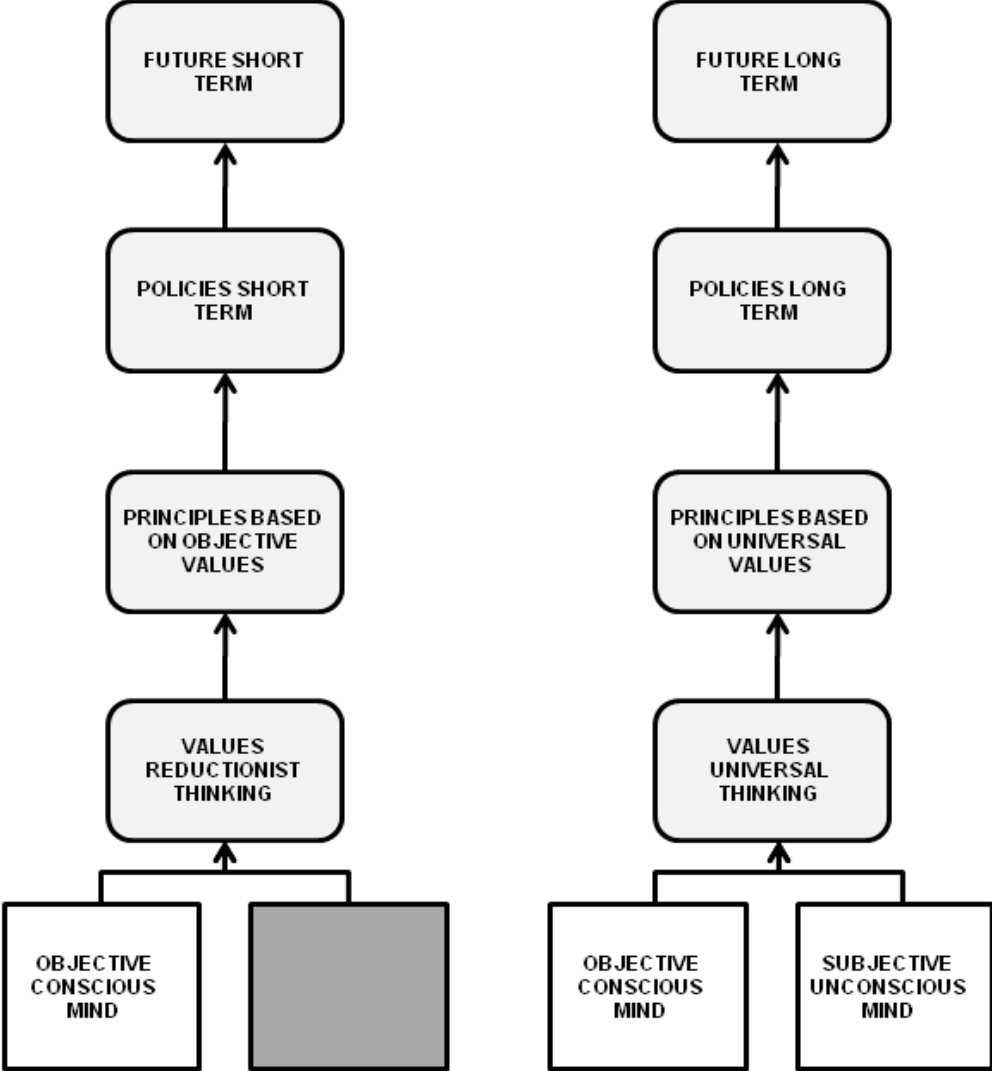
Three critical criteria TO LOOK FOR are provided below and considered essentials for transformation from a conventional unsustainable one dimensional management approach towards a sustainable triple bottom line approach.

- 1) Universal values: This forms the first and KEY foundational aspect involving both the objective and subjective mind or thinking. These sustainable universal values need to be solidly in place in a manager's thinking in order for the next steps to be genuinely understood and sustainable.
- 2) Reductionist versus Integral (whole systems) thinking. This constitutes a major challenge, but Integral thinking tends to become "a natural reaction" when participants have absorbed the essence of the meaning of universal values.
- 3) Short term versus Long term thinking and planning: Short term thinking produces "unintentional consequences" in business practice. In sustainable thinking, the long term is built in as part of the universal values step from the very beginning and critical for a successful business in the future.

MANAGEMENT

CONVENTIONAL

SUSTAINABLE



* Source: Eva Kras, 2011

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