

Transformative Learning Factors to Enhance Integral Healthy Organizations

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on how organizations search for the key factors to develop integral changes and determine broader and higher transcendental learning skills in order to achieve healthy and sustainable organizational growth more effectively and efficiently. This study employed qualitative approaches. The research method used is an in-depth interview of 16 key informants in the field of Non-Formal Education, Transformation, and Healthy Organization Development in Thailand, from both private and government entities. The key query was that in the next 10 years, what will the healthier sustainable organizations look like and what are the main factors to enhance integral healthy organizations? The data was analyzed and interpreted with content-analysis techniques in understanding key factors with insights of how to uplift organizational well-being. Results yielded the eight essential factors for development of a healthy organization integrally – Principle, Physical, Mind, Intellectual, Emotion, Organization, Social, and Environment which are all reciprocally interconnected to accomplish a resilient and sustainable healthy organization. To achieve an integral healthy organization, a balanced organizational structure and climate are required to support change through perspective transformation in order to further develop mutual trust and respect. In addition, public consciousness and systematic ecological worldview development are essential for the realization that organizations are whole and at the same time are parts of the higher whole. It is anticipated that these findings will (1) contribute meaningful information of what are the key factors relating to the development of integral healthy organization, (2) contribute insights as to how those factors interact sequentially and systematically to achieve the greater meaning of balanced and resilient organizations, (3) contribute to learning about conditions impacting organizational direction and alignment to meet with sustainable growth and transcendental competitiveness, and (4) be a resource for further study.

KEYWORDS

Balanced and Resilient Organization, Integral Healthy Organization, Sustainable Growth, Transcendental Competitiveness, Transformative Learning

INTRODUCTION

At present, unrest and disorderliness in the business environment, coupled with a dynamically changing global context, accelerated by quantum leaps in technological development, forces organizations to think more deeply and broadly on how to reach more balanced operations to ensure their survival (Ukaga & Meser, 2010). As a result, traditional strategic thinking is inadequate for understanding

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the business environment to develop the integral transformative learning to create healthier entities with sustainable growth and more work-life balance and happiness (Rainey, 2006).

People are the key factor to achieve this. The Thai Government therefore has launched developmental programs that focus on people through The National Economic and Social Development Plan ("Plan"), issue No. 8 (1997-2001) - No. 11 (2012-2016). From the Eighth to Tenth Plan (1997-2011), the emphasis was geared toward implementing the Sufficiency Economy, the philosophy adopted by every government segment nationwide, focusing on the balanced development of the nation's economic, social and environmental capital. This guideline has continued to the current plan, No.11 (2012-2016) with the participation of a broad cross-section of Thai society as a crucial element of that plan. Highlighted was the integral development of a resilient and happy society through the shared vision of "A happy society with equality, fairness and resilience." (The National Economic and Social Development Plan 11th B.E. (2012 – 2016)). Thus, the fundamental philosophy of the "Plan" was to ensure that all segments of Thai society have equal opportunity and access to resources and will share equally the benefits of development in order to achieve balance with a sustainable healthier society.

The challenge to effectively implement this Plan is determining how to make people change, not only their behaviors, but their values, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior, which are closely linked to their own frames of reference or paradigms and the way each may see and respond to the world. In other words, in order to change individual behaviors, a paradigm shift may occur. Mezirow (1991) in this aspect has contributed a scholarly significant principle to share how people change, and has launched the term "Transformative Learning" to demonstrate learning and the process of how people uplift their own potentials to a higher life meaning to reach healthier organizations.

However, in order to make change significantly and meaningfully through Transformative Learning, one must understand the nature of life as a system. It is the organized structure of the unified and equilibrium wholeness emerging from the interconnectedness of the independent elements. This structure exists and has its own meaning and value that transcend to its own original components (Capra, 1985). In this aspect, in order to transform organizations, we then must understand their compositions or elements and how they interconnect to form a greater whole with higher value and meaning (Capra, 1997). Therefore, in order to achieve healthier organizations, we need to understand that an organization operates as a system and emerges from the interconnection of multiple ingredients – individual, social, community and environment (Capra, 2002).

This is in accordance with both The National Economic and Social Development Plan No.11 (2012-2016) and the Self-directed Learning philosophy, which emphasizes self-control and self-continuous learning throughout life. Lifelong learning characterizes the belief that Transformative Learning must be based on actual life challenges. In addition, the sources of Transformative Learning must come directly from the learners themselves in order to keep them motivated according to their individual needs (Ratana-Ubol, 2000). In particular, focus must be given to the participation of learners and among themselves the regular practice of continuous self-directed improvement; each must learn how to apply these principles in order to integrally uplift his or her own quality of life to achieve balance of sustainable growth with happiness (UNESCO, 2009).

From reviews regarding the necessity of organizational transformation, the important characteristics of the nature of change, the understanding of an integral organizational approach, and the necessity of self-directed learning throughout life, known as lifelong education, Ratana-Ubol and Charungkaittikul (2009) found that present organizational developments and learning are still insufficient in creating the optimal level of systematically resilient healthy organizations. Therefore, the researcher would like to study Transformative Learning Factors to enhance Integral Healthy Organizations from 2014-2024 with an emphasis on achieving healthier organizations through the integration of all life dimensions based on the principles of lifelong education.

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