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Integration of Education for Sustainable Development Practices and influence of Organisational Culture: Case Study of Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA)

Abstract

This article examines the potential for integrating Education for sustainable development into the existing culture of the Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA). It also studies the ease with which members identify themselves with the philosophy of Education for Sustainable Development in an organisation embedded with environmental attitudes and environmentally oriented objectives. The ways in which organisational identity and values shape the association's attitudes were investigated. It achieved this by looking at the historical factors of the organisation and its constrained adaptation to international change such as the adoption of the post 2015 sustainable development goals (SDG 4 on education and target 4.7). For this purpose, interviews were conducted, questionnaires were administered and documentary evidence was collected. In the findings it was noted that the dramatic changes on the sustainable development agenda challenged EEAS's culture and members to see it necessary to consider significant reform, to adapt or to accept the consequences of inaction or risk being irrelevant. The study found that the association's historical oriented legacy is not fully accommodative to international organisational cultural changes and this undermines the association's effort to integrate Education For Sustainable Development practices and to market itself to internal and external audiences. Members were reluctant to change or brand the associations' name to inclusively accommodate new international changes and be relevant to today's world which currently focuses on sustainable development practices. This was mainly caused by members' interest on maintaining the organisation's identity.

Key: Education for Sustainable Development, Organisational culture, Identity, Co-branding, Branding, Marketing.

Introduction

The study explores the connections between the organisational culture, identity, values of the Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EESA) and its influence on the adoption process of Education for Sustainable Development principles. It investigates the ways in which organisational identity; values shape the association's change processes and adaptability. It achieves this by looking at the historical related threat, seeking to explain what EESA is, its mission, values, identity and what resistance there is to change and adapt to the post 2015 sustainable development goals (SDGs). Organisations' mission statement and identity are important in assessing any organisational change process. Changes in an organisation are expected to be preceded by new formulation of its own meaning, mission, situations and identity (Menon and Walsh, 2011; Ettier et al. 1993).

The dramatic change on the sustainable development agenda at a global level challenges the EESA to find it prudent to consider significant reforms, adapt to the new challenges or accept the consequences of inaction. This requires the Members and the Administrators to think like marketers, to view the association and its purpose and relevance using a new lens. This includes branding and co-branding the association. These processes provide an organisation or a place with a new outlook. An organisation or a place name is important for its survival and to fit its purpose, therefore it needs to be clear and understood by all relevant clients. A place or an organisation's name work as a symbolic texts within the organisation and is imbedded in meaning and ideology that are read, interpreted and acted upon by different clients (Pinchevski at al. 2002). This notes that through branding and co-branding an organisation might be clearly visualised and marketed to its internal and external audiences (Aaker, 2004).

Branding is a form of educational organisation marketing. Organisation branding means turning the organisation into a brand not just branding the products the organisation provides but also its practices, values and identity (Morsing, 2002; Fombrum, 1990). Organisation branding goes deeper than marketing, because it is about communicating the values of and identity of the organisation in a strategic manner. It takes into account what the organisation stands for and how those ideals, norms and values are shared with existing clients and potential ones. It caters for both internal and external constituencies (Aaker, 2004).

Co-branding is a brand alliance strategy in which two or more brands are simultaneously presented to clients (Inman and Geylani, 2008). It is used by companies and business organisations to reinforce their image. It is done for different reasons such as to gain access to new clients and to signal unobservable quality in the organisation (Rao et al. 1999).

EESA is expected to look at its existence beyond the 2015 era and accommodate new societal challenges. The post 2015 agenda on Sustainable Development Goals should serve as a further catalyst to prompt the association to engage in self-introspection in order to reassure its continued relevance in today's complex and ever changing world.

Organisational cultures are deeply embedded patterns of social behaviour and shared values that members have about their organisation or its work (Paterson and Spencer, 1991). It focuses on the dimensions of EESA culture and values that influence the adaption of the principles of Education for Sustainable Development, as mandated by the United Nations. In this study, organizational culture is defined according to Dille (1992) as "shared beliefs, values, ideologies of a group which propel/impel peoples to action and give their actions and existence meaning". The study is examined through a framework in which values and beliefs are a focus because none alterations or alteration's to an organisation usually impact/affect underlying beliefs system and its relevance in today's ever-changing society. An assessment on whether the ever changing post 2015 sustainable development global context or political flux within which EESA exists still makes it relevant is important.

The SDGs have a strong position to impose conditions and influence on the core values of associations and other non-governmental organisations (NGO's). Today's changing societies require more flexible organisations and flexible approaches and multiple skills to influence change (Khadelwal and Toshi, 2002). It is important and necessary for associations and organisations to respond to international pressures through flexible cultural mechanisms and adaptable values and structures. This has a potential of helping organisations to respond to local, national and international pressures. Adaptable values and structures are of special interest because in many respects organisations' mission, policies and practices usually move in opposite directions in an effort to maintain their shared identity (Kohut and Zander, 1996). Organisational adaptation has been defined as the modifications and alterations in the organisation's behaviour, particularly its components (mission, values, identity) in order to adjust to changes in the external environment (Stevens et al. 2008; Zsoka, 2007; Cameron, 1984). This is done to restore equilibrium to an unbalanced condition (De Zilwa, 2007). The adaptation process makes emphasis on the lack of fit that arises between the organisation or association's behaviour in relation to its local and international environment or United Nation (UN) mandate on education for sustainable development (Cameron, 1984).

Organisation's identity provides a sense of community by which coordination and learning and change are structured. Identity also limits the search for new avenues for exploration of new ideas and new activities in the organisation. While peoples' multiple organisational identities and values have a potential to improve but it also limit the search for organisational change (Kohut and Zander, 1996; Navran, 1990). Organisational values are helpful in informing and describing to organisational members the kind of behaviours that are acceptable and core mandate of the organisation. This helps them to be clear about what they stood for. Organisational values and peoples' values are characterised by societal related changes (Di-Maggio and Powell, 1991).

Historical background of Environmental Education for Southern Africa (EEASA)

Environmental Education For Southern Africa was formed in 1982 and has been in existence for 33 years. It was formed at a conference held at Treverton college in South Africa. EEASA has grown to more than 5000 paid up members drawn from different fields and continues to grow. The membership consists of conservation officials, community and development people, academics, researchers, teachers and students. Its key role is to support environmental education in Southern Africa and also provide people with opportunities to share and exchange ideas and opinions on environmental education through different means such as annual conference, publications and workshops. It is a body concerned with matters of public and professional interest concerning environmental education.

External environment and EESA

The internal and external environment of EESA is characterised by dynamism rather than statics. The internal environment includes the individual cultures and identities. The dynamism stems from local, national and international social forces such as organisation culture, identity and values and people's complexities that are exerting pressure or influences

upon the association. These influences are pushing and influencing the association in different thinking directions. The dynamism also influences the manner in which the association adapts to external pressures (e.g., responding to UN Mandate on Education for SDGs). Di-Maggio and Powell (1991) noted that organisations adopt a resistance stance towards change when the changes are not congruent with the prevailing organisational identity, culture, values and norms. Organisational identity concepts are interconnected with cultural contexts, identification with the organisation and its history (Marger and Louw, 2013). These are key concepts in the process of organisational adaptation (Glynn, 2000).

Individual organisations and professionals have distinctive cultures and identities and these shape their responses to organisational changes and understanding of international programmes such as Education for Sustainable and environmental education programmes. These programmes (Education for Sustainable Development and Environmental Education) challenge organisations to undergo cultural changes and this is a complex messy process for professionals (Miller and Lieberman, 1988). A cultural change involves changing the culture of the organisation and peoples' cultures within the organisations.

The EESA culture and its response to the new requirements in regard to the focus and promotion of Education for Sustainable Development are important. Organisational and individual's response to education for sustainable development are important for sustainable development and their manifestation may lead to value conflicts both within and between the individual members. Relations between individuals and their organisation are important because individual member's values are expected to be in harmony with the values exposed by the organisation and be reflected in its mission and philosophy (Kerekes, et al.2003). For example, if an organisation has environmental values, these may be reflected in the philosophy, mission, and intended strategy of the organisation and commonly interpreted by the members (Schein 1985). These (philosophy, values and mission) are accepted as valid and to be spread across the organisation and passed on to new members, as the desired and acceptable ways of thinking and behaving.

In an organisation such as EESA, where environmental attitudes are embedded, one outstanding question emerged: how can the issue of Education for Sustainable development be integrated into the existing organisational culture and how the organisational members and groups can easily identify themselves with the philosophy of education for sustainable development, in an organisation embedded with environmental attitudes and environmental oriented objectives. This situation may lead to a strong organisational and individual culture and identity which may lead to organisational rigidity to change and a behaviour which is not consistent with societal reality.

The individual member's values and organisational values is the foundation for a flexible organisational culture. There should not be contradictions, conflict between, the individual and the organisational values and identity (Grimshaw et al. 2001; Casson, 1999). Conflict between these may have negative or positive consequences on how the integration of education for sustainable development practices into the organisational objectives and strategies are done or adopted by members.

Organisational identity, values have an influence in organisational adaptability (Dutton et al. 1994). Organisational identity is a form in which an organisational member or members define themselves as a social group in relation to the external environment, and how they perceive and understand themselves to be different from their colleagues and competitors (Grimshaw et al. 2001; Dutton et al. 1994). Organisational members shape and shaped by organisational identity and these processes have an influence on how the organisation adapt to new changes and outside influences.

Organisations such as EESA and others face today's pressure from international organisations (United Nations) to adopt certain innovations, respond to sustainability issues and to adopt structures to survive and maintain their identities. Organisations are in continuous struggle to survive, for organisational identity and legitimacy (Stensaker and Norgard, 2001), and they are expected to be an interconnected, internationalised entity. They are expected to handle the pressure for change with sensitivity because pressure for innovation may be understood as an organisational identity attack (Stensaker and Norgard, 2001; Casson, 1999).

Research Methodology

Given the qualitative nature of this research, the conflict transformation theory was considered the relevant approach. It takes into account the deeper structural and cultural aspects of the association and its members. It is a method of understanding organisations and inducing change in peoples' relationships through improving mutual understanding and changing the consciousness and character of human beings (Botes, 2003). A single-case explanatory approach was used to gain an understanding of the EEASA culture, identity and values and their influences towards change.

Sample

137 Members of the association who attended the EEASA 2015 conference held in Swaziland participated in this study. 50 of the participants were interviewed and 28 responded to questionnaires. These members were from ten different countries; Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland, Kenya, Mozambique, DR Congo, Zambia, Lesotho and Sweden. More than 300 people participated in this conference.

Data collection

Open ended questionnaires, organisational documents and secondary literature were constructed as the main measuring instruments and the data generated were analysed to guarantee triangulation.

The open ended questionnaires were emailed to the 137 members and some were distributed during the conference. 9% of the members responded to the questionnaires.

Documents from different organisations who are members of the EEASA and the Matsapha conference declaration 2015 were used as a source of data. The documents were useful in

gaining some insights on culture, values and identity of the association and how these influence the adaption of the Education For sustainable Development principles.

Data analysis

The content analysis approach was used to analyse the data and it resulted in these themes: exclusionary organisational identity; organisational historical oriented legacy; layers of member's professional identities; international agencies influences.

Exclusionary organisational identity

In most EEASA related documents, it is pronounced that this is an environmental education-oriented organisation. For example, within the Matsapha Declaration of 2015, it is stated that EEASA is an organisation for Environmental educators in the South African Development Community (SADC) region. This works against the spirit of the post 2015 sustainable development practices which aim at creating an inclusive world society as a vehicle for sustainable development. Though, EEASA put an effort on promoting inclusion in its research publications and membership but it remains undermined by preserving or maintaining their “misleading” organisational name or identity (environmental education). This makes the association not clearly visualised, accommodative to new practices related to ESD and marketed to its internal and potential external audiences. This was also noted by the one participant that *there is a need to address the issue of ESD with an understanding that ESD is not synonymous with EE, EE is an aspect of ESD.*

For example, the 2015 Matsapha declaration conference notes that EEASA organises annual international conferences among other things to strengthened local networks on the environmental education and related sectors. Strengthening the environmental education aspect still remains the focus of the association. The environmental aspect is more pronounced compared to other key aspects such as Education for Sustainable Development (SED). The fact that Environmental Education is the focus of the association was also eluded by one participant: *the Environmental Education aspect should be kept, it is our origin. This is our actual focus of the organisation. Changing it will simple mean, we have lost our focus.*

The 2015 Matsapha declaration resolution three (3) also highlights this complexity, where it notes that there is a need for the Association (EEASA) to quickly develop new Education for Sustainable development (ESD) policies and to audit the existing ones and align them with the SDG 4 on education and target 4.7. This suggests that the Association (EEASA)'s effort to re-align its policies with ESD should be preceded by a new formulation of their identity, meaning and mission. This may help the Association to assess itself whether it is still relevant to the post 2015 sustainable development global context within which it exist or not. The issue of relevance is also raised within the Matsapha declaration conference 2015 resolution six (6), where it is noted that EEASA should be re-energise and be a community engaged organisation to remain relevant in all sectors of society.

Organisational historical oriented legacy

Association's historical oriented legacy is not truly used to accommodate international changes and market itself to external audience. This is reflected on members' reluctance to change or brand the associations' name to inclusively accommodate new international changes and be relevant to today's world or demands. For example, 68% who of the participants responded to questionnaires noted that the association's name should not be branded or changed. It was noted that *Environmental Education is the basis of the organisation. We have that in common as an organisation. However, if there is other ways on wording to express the aspect of Education for the environment it can be done. Another participant noted that the name should be kept because it has a powerful history-names like ESD will come and go!*

While 29% of them stated that the association's name should be branded not changed. They noted that the title should be:

eye catching and capture the concept of sustainability. Education for sustainable development does not include only the environment as there are different aspects that one can look at, so by including, EE only it means the organisation is only looking at Education Environment only. Yet, it is not the case.

Environmental Education should be changes to Education For sustainability. So that it becomes more inclusive or holistic education. Environmental Education tends to narrow the scope of ESD. ESD, is not talking about the environment alone, therefore, it should be referred to as Association for Education for Sustainable Development for Southern Africa. This has a potential of encouraging educational institutions (schools, universities) to review their EE programmes to incorporate ESD priority areas in their programme designs. This might help institutions to re-write their programmes in terms of balancing the principles/pillars of sustainability.

Different branded names were suggested, these include; Southern African Association for Sustainable Development (SAAESD), Southern African Association for Sustainability Education (SAASE), ESD Association of Southern Africa (EASA).

The Association's acknowledgement of its rich history serves as strength and also as a threat to relevance in today's society or the post 2015 sustainable development era. This is also a threat to the adaptation of the post 2015 sustainable development agenda. The Matsapha declaration conference 2015 resolution four (4), acknowledges the rich history of the association, since 1982, and resolution nine (9), re-emphasis the spirit of advancing the environmental education legacy. The organisation historical oriented identity brings contradiction to the association's way forward or the Matsapha declaration conference 2015, particularly resolution three (3) and resolution six (6), which states that the world has changed since the adoption of the Tbilisi Declaration on Environmental Education in 1977.

Layers of members' identities and complexities of EE

Members' identity and their understanding of the concept Environmental Education (EE) has an influence on how they accept changes. For example, one of the participants noted that: *EE is not only concerned about the biophysical environment (natural environment).*

It is encompassing enough to cover the economic, social, cultural and political environment. Generally people (most people) have narrow view of EE by linking it to natural environment as something which deals with only the environmental conservation. In this vein a few Professors have misled the masses into thinking EE is about the natural environment . EE is about, in/through and for the environment; the environment which is well encompassing even more than or equal to ESD; an agenda that I believe even the person who has influenced the documentation of this questionnaires is heavily promoting.

The participant's voice highlights the existing complexities surrounding ESD and EE. The above voice tends to suggest that EE is more encompassing than ESD, and it is embedded within EE. Yet other voices noted that *there is a need to address the issue of ESD with an understanding that ESD is not synonymous with EE.*

The members of the association (EEASA) composed of individuals, industry, government departments, educational institutions, municipality, professional organisations and non-governmental environmental organisations. These have different layers of members with different identities. EEASA is multiple identity organisation, with multiple influences in its functions. This type of identities has an influence on how the association understand the concept of Environmental Education (EE) reacts to changes. Warberg and Banes (2000) noted that organisations today face drastic changes than ever before and their members feel a loss of status and uncertainties about their future. Some react by linking to department identities and professional groups or teams (Jentten at al. 2002; Callen, 1993). Professional groups provide a sense of identity and belonging to professionals (Van Knippenberg and Van Sechie, 2000), structural and cultural change can be perceived as a threat to their source of identity, status and their sense of professionalism.

These layers of members' identities are institutionally or departmental interconnected and have an influence on how the EEASA association is governed. Each member's interests, knowledge, positions and networks among themselves create a dynamic political process or ideological warfare with an effect on the changes process. The ideological warfare was noted in this participant's voice: *it will be unfortunate for EEASA to change its 'EE' name on the basis of one- so-called "Know-all Prof. Nhamo" who wants to impose his ideas and intellectual hegemony on peoples. EE is still relevant and should only incorporate the sustainability aspects in its doings.*

These dynamics are influenced by the original organisations values, their professional values and identities and of the association (EEASA). Members were value laden or value-influenced in the interplay of these issues (Environmental Education and Educational for Sustainable Development). There were influenced by a strong presence of their personal and professional interests and organisational interests. These dynamics makes it difficult to restructure the multi-professional organisation (EEASA) with multiple professional identities. These dynamics makes the association unfit to the social, political and economic contexts within which it operates. This suggests that there should be no complicated linkages of individuals' uncertainties and their personal, and institutions' interests, and values which make it impossible for the association to initiate change. To deal with such uncertainties requires members to reformulate the relationship between self, others and the association (Jentten et al. 2002).

Conclusion

The study concluded that association has managed to instil an organisational identity which enhances members' commitment towards its shared core norms, values and goals-which makes it hard to easily accommodate new changes;

- Association adopt change but suffers from organisational image and member identification crisis;
- Association's values have been institutionalised and directed to the members for the fulfilment of their professional needs and personal values;
- Association values were influenced by international organisations (UNDP) values and practices-thus suffers from organisational image and strategic marketing dilemma;
- There is no perfect alignment between association's values and the post 2015 sustainable development principles because of professional identities;
- Members have become cultural insiders instead of cultural outsiders in order to observe their institutional behaviour patterns fairly (being sensitive of their organisation's culture and societal needs);
- Members have subcultures, networks with members inclined to subject paradigms and professional affiliation;
- There were fluidity of subcultures influenced by individual academics, place of work and the nature of their work;
- There was a degree of cohesion between different subcultures within the association;
- Pressure for branding or innovation on the association's name is misunderstood as organisational identity attack;
- Association's historical oriented legacy not truly used to accept changes and market the association.
- Association historical oriented legacy and values are used as an academic ideological warfare.

Recommendations

- The association should engage in the process of branding and co-branding to maintain its legacy and capture the ESD brand more visible;
- The concept of ESD should be nurtured into existing organisation's values and identities;

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