15 Reflexivity: Linking Individual and Organisational Values

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15.1 Introduction

The introduction to this book recognises that CSR policies and practices are frequently added on to existing organisational activities as afterthoughts. They are often ineffective because they are intended to modify embedded practices. Consequently they are commonly perceived as superficial, meaningless gestures. The challenge to proponents of CSR is to find ways of incorporating decisions compatible with social responsibility at all levels of organisational activity.

This article outlines a management development model which integrates CSR into organisational policy and practice by focussing on the role of values in decision-making processes. The model is based on the premise that it is a mistake to assign responsibility to organisations as if an organisation has a personality and so to speak of ‘corporate decisions’. Decisions are not made by an organisation: people within the organisation make decisions. Personal values inform the perceptual filters which shape individual interpretations of organisational policy and decisions. Many people are unaware of the ways in which their values shape their interpretations and influence their decisions.

This model encourages individuals to be aware of their values and the role those values play in decision making. It also focuses on the relationship between individual values and organisational policy and practice. It is therefore a model which is particularly relevant to CSR as it suggests a relationship between individual and organisational values, while connecting them by improving managerial effectiveness. This results in better implementation of organisational policies in general and any CSR policies there may be in particular, which eventually improves performance and adds value all round!

This model has three components: personal reflection, group exploration and practical application. These components work together in repeated cycles of action and reflection:
15.2 The essence of the model

The model is a programme of organisation wide management development. All managers could be involved, since CSR considerations are part of everyone’s work. But to achieve effective and widespread organisational change the programme must involve senior decision makers, policy makers and budget holders.

Individuals can develop self-awareness independently by using personality profiling techniques as a form of self-assessment. There are many popular psychometric assessment and development tools available (e.g. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Personal Values Budget etc.). However, personal development is limited when attempted alone. People develop greater self-awareness with the support of a professional practitioner in a structured programme.

Personal reflection

Through personal reflection the participant identifies a particular workplace problem. The practitioner then supports the participant in reflecting on their predispositions and exploring how these may be contributing to their experience of the situation. Links are made with a participant’s general behavioural predispositions and patterns are identified, thus helping the participant see how these predispositions are limiting their repertoire of responses to the world in general and in the workplace in particular.

As their self-awareness is enhanced in this way, participants begin to see alternative ways of framing situations in which they become progressively more able to generate creative responses. They develop response-ability, the ability to respond to situations with self-awareness. The practitioner supports this development through repeated cycles of reflection on their reactions and conse-