

Training in Values as an Incubator for Sustainability Attitudes

Juan Manuel Pineda-Albaladejo

Psychologist. Master's Degree in Health Psychology and Clinical Practice. Doctoral Student in Health Sciences. International Doctoral School (EIDUCAM). Spain.

Francisco José Moya-Faz

Assistant Dean of the Department of Psychology. Catholic University of Murcia (UCAM). Spain.

Jorge López Puga

Professor in the Department of Psychology. Catholic University of Murcia (UCAM). Spain.

juanmanuelpineda@ono.com, moyafaz@ucam.edu, jpuga@ucam.edu

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Abstract

Following the proposals arising from the Schwartz model on the cognitive representations of human needs expressed in his Theory of Values, instrumental values and terminal values, which are vital for understanding and entrepreneurship behavior, we have engaged in a critical review of this model and the types of values. We go on to examine the academic curriculum of ethical and moral profiles as promoters of sustainable attitude values in order to contribute an integrated and updated option to the academic world.

Key words

Values, attitudes, entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, sustainability, sustainable entrepreneur.



Values from a “Christ-centric” profile follow already existing theories

1. Introduction

Values are considered to be cognitive representations, the motivational purposes of basic human needs, on both an individual level as biological organisms, the fruit of social interaction, and owing to the very survival and/or well-being of the collective or group. As a motivational construct, they are dedicated to desirability and achievement. They are abstract goals that guide the selection and evaluation of actions as standards or criteria, organized according to a hierarchical system that is unique to each subject, that transcends specific actions, and that is more reminiscent of norms and attitudes. An example of this is the immense research arising from the Theory of Needs (Maslow, 1998) and even more, Schwartz’s Theory of Values (1996), which defines values as desirable goals that are trans-situational, vary in importance and serve as a guide for the life principles of people. This author provides a thorough discussion of the evidence and the consideration that processes, such as accessibility, produce greater activation towards the behavior and motivate and influence attention to relevant aspects, perception and interpretation of situations and even the planning of the subject’s actions and, therefore, lead to an activation of said values and their priorities, as has been proposed by other authors. The specific objective of this study is therefore to delimit the typology described and to consider the transcendence of value training in support of the intended sustainable attitudes.

2. Theories of Needs and Values

It is obvious that the personal and contextual circumstances of the subject and his or her needs anticipate to a great extent the quest, the cost or the expansion of the different human values without it constituting the entirety in said dynamic relationship, as the subjective evaluative experience is also predetermining as the expression prior to the objective current reality. This is what we could call the “ecological economy of value.” We are therefore talking about overcoming the subjectivism-objectivism antithesis, a dynamic relationship between subject and object in qualitative terms, where the value as a reactive structural quality vis-à-vis the properties of the object is reciprocally mediated by principles, as propositions or theoretical formulations aimed at reason, that express a certain way of proceeding that is physical, spiritual or moral, and that acquire value when the subject makes them his or her own and they drive him or her to action and through the conviction as a fruit of the spirit, this is to say, that dimension that is beyond the sensitivity and reason, that is inspiration and creation, and that from which we live and for which we are willing to risk our life. This is an undeniable entrepreneurial factor. The evident proposal of the fundamental values in a “Christ-centric profile” that contemplates constructs such as love in opposition to selfishness and indifference, justice as opposed to exclusion, peace instead of violent behaviors, honesty in the face of prevailing corruption, solidarity in the presence of individualism and fierce competition, austerity as the antithesis of consumerism, in addition to reflective contemplation and gratitude, are examples that bring us closer to the Theories of Needs and Values already present in science.

The Theory of Needs presents, in five groups or categories, from its humanistic perspective that primary, secondary, individual, societal, economic or non-economic and aesthetic needs, as well as the needs for knowledge or understanding of the human being, are prioritized and oriented from survival towards those aimed at development through goods (complementary, substitutes and independent, capital or consumer, perishable or non-perishable) or services (private or public). As one meets the needs in increasing pyramidal order, the individual passes through physiological, safety, social or belonging

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and esteem needs to the ideal construct that all beings aspire to, related to general satisfaction, which the author calls “self-realization.” As can be seen, this humanistic model leaves aside the existentialist achievement of the deep sense of life, so part of the science has ordered the axiom that the subject is master of his own destiny, being aware in his or her individuality where successes and failures are wrought from and declaring himself or herself, obviously, responsible for his or her own actions. This is how we have reached the boundaries of an exacerbated anthropocentrism, halfway between the ontological truth and pure praxeology.

If the needs are in themselves a source of motivation, as a contribution to this field, the Theory of Values provides a relational framework for the analysis, prediction and explanation of behavior from the orientation of ten values or motivational purposes, as a cognitive representation of the aforementioned human needs and unifying theory for the field of human motivation. That is to say, it is a way of organizing the different needs, motivations and objectives proposed by the scientific literature, through moral, philosophical-political and ideological dimensions, or simply a social perspective in which the subject can situate himself or herself. Schwartz described the offshoots of the ten basic values according to their motivational purposes, from a circular structure, organizing them into two dimensions: the individualistic, consisting of self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement and power; and the collectivist dimension of benevolence, tradition and conformity. Security and universalism could be placed together in a mixed dimension, since they can operate in both the individual and the collective dimensions. This theory of circular structure and its relationships according to the principles of compatibility and logical contradiction of values goes against the unidimensional proposal presented by Triandis, Bontempo, Villarreal, Asai and Lucca (1988), where the subject is polarized towards independence (idiocentric, individualistic) in his or her priority towards values that give him or her independence or towards group dependence (allocentric, collectivist).

It is interesting to reflect on the results obtained in the descriptive study by Moriano, Trejo and Palací (2001), comparing the different types of values and the specific values among a group of subjects who are entrepreneurs and another group whose members are not, indicating that the entrepreneurs are more individualistic (positive correlation with power, achievement, self-management and stimulation) as opposed to the collectivists (who identify with benevolence, tradition and conformity), a matter which in some ways ratifies the “group think” phenomenon as the result of globalism in all its facets, whether it be on the basic formative level or in the economic philosophy of the markets.

All considered, there is that large group of entrepreneurs with balanced individual and collective values, with a sustainable mentality and initiative, that not only provide a work space for society, they also use their businesses to promote initiatives that minimize the environmental impact, resorting to the most human needs in a potential vision of a better future (Gagnon & Michael, 2012; Gagnon, 2012), as is understood by the sustainable business spirit, focused on preserving the natural environment, supporting life and community, seeking to transcend towards innovation and improvement through products, processes and services in which profiting is global: for the individual himself or herself, society and the ecosystem and its natural resources (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011). Because of all this, this is more than enough reason to consider the scope of the training in values that the most traditional and universal subjects present in their academic syllabus, in order to achieve the homeostasis of attitudes that bring us to predictive theories of the subject’s behavior in specific and general situations, in a stable manner over time.

The Theory of Values provides an analytic, predictive and explanatory framework for behavior

3. The transcendence of value training

Quintero (2012) states that values are the foundations of all human training, seen from any perspective. Value training implies the harmonious development of all dimensions of the individual. For Max Scheler, mentor in the development of phenomenology, ethics and philosophical anthropology and religion with its individualistic view of man, values are phenomenological events that can be distinguished from natural and scientific events, in which love is the true driving force, since emotional life is irreducible to sentient and intellectual life (López, 2013). This objectivist conception that considers values as independent and immutable qualities is what that enables us to talk about a “material ethics of values,” already proclaimed by this author in the early part of this century, with the premise of inducing this moral state of mind in future sustainable entrepreneurs. Teaching objectives, therefore, must be oriented towards the insertion of bioethics, inspiring the progressive development of professional competence through cognitive psychological (habits and skills), motivational (professional interest, values, ideals, self-assessment) and affective (emotions, sentiments) training, harmonizing the values of specialized technical-scientific knowledge with those of the global and humanistic knowledge of the person, thus favoring the symbiosis among the objectives and the way in which means and resources are orchestrated to implement them (Franco & Duque, 2015).

The UNESCO report from 1997, entitled *Learning: the treasure within*, contemplated the fundamental pillars in education, such as learning how to learn, to do, to coexist, to live with others and, what is considered essential, “learning to be,” thus improving one’s own personality, acquiring autonomy, judgment and a sense of responsibility, building memory and reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical capacities and communications skills. Could it be possible to integrate the values of “being” and “know-how” into the learning that promotes attitudes, with sustainable values as a bio-psycho-social-spiritual subject? From the dialectic axiom of composition and synthesis, joining conceptual and methodological aspects, values, attitudes and skills in each case or discipline, it is possible to achieve their integration. This process of the communion of theoretical elements and paradigms favors the knowledge of the subjects of study, strengthening competences and personal skills and coping with a changing society, with a methodical ordering of contents between the subject matters of the different disciplines and sharing the decisions regarding the epistemological structuring of each of them, without losing the specific singularity. It means “learning how to engage in entrepreneurship” in a sustainable manner. Therefore, curricular integration proves transcendental as a flexible process and structure, relating and methodically ordering, where thanks to the institutional mechanisms that favor new curricula, which are coordinated both vertically and horizontally, they become a crucial objective in research, including that on values.

4. Values and subjects in the curriculum

From research currently underway on the transcendence of the inclusion of ethical-moral subjects in the curricula, we are faced with the challenge of exploring the correlation between sustainable attitudes and the constructs of both psychological and spiritual wellbeing, as well as the social-moral human values that are derived from the subjects implemented in the academic curriculum of many universities, such as Humanities, Ethics, Theology, Social Doctrine of the Church and Bioethics. These examples promoting applied human and social values lead us to a hypothetical construct of an “intelligent university training,” generating dynamic expertises in thought and action, beyond the basic contents of environmental education taught in the levels prior to the university period, even considering financial,

In sustainable entrepreneurship, earnings are global

technological and political factors, recognized nowadays as more important, apart from education (Albano, 2014).

It is paradoxical to recognize the need to implement said subjects in the area of higher education and yet observe a rejection of their teaching by the educational community, when it should be facilitating and guiding values education. Perilla and Guerrero (2009) outline certain causes related to pedagogical knowledge, education and teaching conditions, since their contents must lead to structures of universal moral judgment and reasoning, overcoming the purely descriptive and demanding that we go beyond good intentions or sophist exercises. Values such as discipline, responsibility, autonomy, effort, interest in knowledge, respect, honesty and identity still constitute academic values, extolling attitudinal and intentional synergies that derive in sustainable behaviors. Therefore we must start by avoiding an exclusively intellectual and mechanistic model by developing suppositions of personal competence and ethical values that represent a level of personal wellbeing, satisfaction, promotion, progress and sustainable growth.

In Spain, we have the example of the Catholic University of Murcia (UCAM) and its teaching guides for the 2015-2016 academic year, with their specific and common contents in most of the degree programs it offers:

- **Basic ethics.** It focuses on reasoning and the synthesis of contents from the field of knowledge of ethics, reflectively analyzing information of an ethical nature and the essential elements on which the moral classification of human acts depends, identifying the characteristics of the person from a comprehensive anthropology. Its fundamental objectives are to identify the structural elements of the human action, to individualize and distinguish among the different values linked to the action and to relate the moral structure of the actions to professional practice.
- **Theology I and II.** Its main objective is “to promote a comprehensive education that enables the full development of the person and excellence in his or her professional future, considering fundamental aspects of European and western culture as the basic elements: theology, ethics and the humanities.” All of this means expanding the vision of man and the world from categories and values that have shaped our culture, facilitating greater personal maturity and the comprehension of the social and cultural context in which the student will conduct his or her future profession. It aims to analyze the profound questions of human beings (life, death, happiness, pain, God) and the answers that have been given in the history of thought, contrasting the anthropology held by the Christian revelation with the ideologies of modernity and post-modernity. From the reasoned basis underlying knowledge of God, a coherent discourse is articulated on human dignity, recognizing the Revelation as a response to the world’s questions and their transcendence.
- **Social Doctrine of the Church.** It intends to interpret and provide guidance according to faith about complex human relationships and the problems that are derived from them, from the family setting to international relations, collaborating with social transformation through the training of true professionals who demonstrate the ethical commitment acquired with habits that exhibit conscious, free and responsible responses to transform reality and thus build civilization from a perspective of justice and love, as a showing of sensitivity to the world’s inequalities and injustices from the Christian perspective.
- **Applied Ethics and Bioethics.** Directly related to the objective of this university, it undertakes the promotion of a comprehensive education that permits the full development

With bioethics, technical-scientific values are harmonized with those of global and humanistic knowledge

of the individual and excellence in his or her professional future. It considers the basis of European and western culture, “theology, ethics and the humanities,” as basic elements, developing the reflective and critical capacity of students with regard to social matters, stimulating professional responsibility as a path of self-fulfillment and giving them the skills they need to adequately reflect on important modern bioethical questions through the acquisition of rational, scientific and ethical criteria. It means acquiring the capacity to gather and interpret relevant data for the issuance of judgments of a social, scientific or ethical nature, relating the moral structure of actions with the future professional practice, identifying the characteristics of human beings from a comprehensive anthropology and substantiating human dignity, analyzing and discussing bioethical questions with regard to human sexuality and the beginning and end of human life from an ontological individualistic perspective.

- **Humanities.** Men and women as spiritual beings, their thought and lives through the centuries, are the subject of its study. It intends to promote a cultivated creative intelligence and a more complete human training, distinguishing the essential foundations of our civilization from its accidental cultural characteristics, basic historical landmarks of circumstantial events and those elements that constitute its cause-effect structure, focusing on the structural limitations of human knowledge and identifying the relationship that exists between pain, suffering or death and the finite nature of the human being. Among its objectives is an attempt to individualize the basis of the social nature of human beings and the structure of society, with the distinction between the different models of the ideal society and the political and social processes that characterize our contemporary society.

The reading of its specific contents and its objectives inevitably leads us to the reflection that all respond to the aforementioned human needs (individual, social and survival-related, and the collective wellbeing), as well as its cognitive representation, translated into motivational purposes called quintessential human values, and even further, into mixed dimensional criteria in a balanced manner, from reflection on them until the ability to interpret them practically and professionally (Small, 2013; Reyes, Díaz, Dueñas & Bernal, 2016). In brief, we find ourselves in the presence of an “intellectual and human matrix,” where there also underlies an affinity with Scheler’s axiology, in which spiritual values determine beauty (an aesthetic quality), justice (a legal quality) and truth (an intellectual quality) of objects, which inevitably represents the analysis and qualification of one’s own acts by the subject, maturing one’s own knowledge and the social-cultural context in which one operates, facilitating the necessary synergies for social updating and transformation in terms of sustainable, just, rational, egalitarian, inclusive, scientific and bioethical development and through the cultivation of a creative intelligence and ontological and anthropological human training, making the comprehensive development of the individual possible, and thus certain implicit sustainable attitudes (Melé, 2015; Sánchez, 2015; Booth, Simón, Sandoval, Echeita & Muñoz, 2015).

The refining and vocation to which these subjects and their intercultural verification lead make sense of the hypothesis proposed in terms of their mediation in the values suggested by Schwartz in his studies (Schwartz, 2005, 2006). Without sacrificing their individualistic dimension, power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation and independence of action and thought as self-management in turn come to serve the community in favor of benevolence and tradition, acting according to expectations and social norms, from the shared values of personal safety and interpersonal relationship, as well as comprehension, appreciation, tolerance and the protection of nature and social wellbeing as universal values. It is the phenomenon of childhood “protofusion” (Gaviria, Ferreira, Martínez & Whitehouse, 2015) or adult “group fusion,” in which the union between personal and social identity is proposed,

Personal values and those of the world that have shaped our culture are the primary objectives

with functional implication between them, and that leads the individual to a high level of commitment, not only to oneself and one's identity, but also to the group (Galindo, 2015; Gómez & Vázquez, 2015).

5. Conclusions

Values as the expression of the changing needs of human beings and as the phenomenological significance of development and existential progress find their sense in their conduct with others and the environment. Succeeding in forming a conscience that reflects and establishes the ethical qualities of reality poses a challenge in light of the amorality that might arise from an entrepreneurial spirit of a purely individualistic nature and without any sensitivity towards the collective and the natural context they share. The investment in psychological capital and its value system seems promising, as well as that made in its learning through the strengthening of universal values that directly affect the attitudes, intentions and conducts promoting sustainability, beyond theories or entelechies that are difficult to apply. It is a matter of "learning how to engage in entrepreneurship" in a sustainable manner, as an axiom that leads to transformational leadership, whether from a lay or religious focus that acts by earning respect, that expresses its confidence in the achievement of its objectives, that overcomes problems from different points of view, helping develop the very capacity in its individualized consideration, with the capacity to transcend one's own interest in benefit of the group, altering the hierarchy of needs and achieving a change in values, attitudes and beliefs, with an exceptional increase in one's own performance.

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