



“Mindfulness and Leadership Research”

Day: Thursday 12th July 2018 Time: 9:00 – 10:15 am Track: Mindfulness in Society

The first presenter is Silke Rupperecht. She will discuss how mindfulness training impacted senior corporate leaders in terms of their performance and leadership. A secondary objective was to develop new theories that may be tested in future empirical studies.

The second presenter is Kiki Vreeling. She will talk about a study to qualitatively explore the effects of a mindful leadership course on leadership and to conceptualize Mindful Leadership.

The third presenter is Megan Reitz. She will discuss whether and how mindfulness training and practice could develop resilience, collaboration and leading in complex contexts.

The final speaker is Elizabeth King. The purpose of her presentation is to highlight the value of extending the range and depth of Buddhist-derived interventions by capturing and exploring the value of critical and collective approaches to mindfulness that derive from other traditions and schools of thought.

Symposium overview

- Presenter 1** **Silke Rupperecht** - Mindful leadership: The leaders' narrative how mindfulness affects their leadership style and performance
- Presenter 2** **Kiki Vreeling**- Conceptualizing Mindful leadership: a qualitative study among medical specialists.
- Presenter 3** **Megan Reitz** - How does mindfulness training develop the critical leadership capacities of resilience, collaboration and complexity leadership - and is practice feasible?
- Presenter 4** **Elizabeth King** - The Wheel of Mindfulness: A Generative Framework for Mindful Leadership Development.
- Chair:** **Wendy Kersemaekers**



Mindful leadership: The leaders' narrative how mindfulness affects their leadership style and performance

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Background: Mindfulness training is a novel method of leadership development. Contrary to the popularity of it, there is a scarcity of research investigating if and how mindfulness training affects leadership. To gain a better understanding of the potential of new research field, qualitative research is advantageous.

Objective: The main objective of this study was to understand if and how mindfulness training impacted senior corporate leaders in their work lives. A secondary objective was to develop new theories about the impact of mindfulness training on leadership that may be tested in future empirical studies.

Method: The sample comprised 13 leaders (n=11 male) working in six organizations that completed a 10-week workplace mindfulness training between 6 months and 1 year ago. We conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews. Two coders coded each interview separately and then discussed and agreed on codes. To derive themes all coders and two additional independent researcher not prior involved in this research, participated in the process.

Results: Leaders reported that mindfulness training affected self-leadership including the management of distraction and greater self-care, their leadership in terms of applying mindfulness skills in inter-relational situations including relationship conflicts, their inclination to serve others, their adaptability to change. Though not the objective of this study, participants reported effects of shared mindfulness on team and organizational level.

Conclusion: Mindfulness training positively impacted leadership behaviour of a sample of 13 leaders. We add to the literature by summarizing how mindfulness may impact performance and leadership style and propose a logic model of change for future investigations. Practical implications and future research are discussed.



Conceptualizing Mindful leadership: a qualitative study among medical specialists.

Kiki Vreeling^{1,2}, Wendy Kersemaekers¹, Dirk van Dierendonck², Anne Speckens¹

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Background and objectives: The field of mindfulness training for leaders is evolving rapidly. Mindfulness might be beneficial for leadership as it is known to improve different areas relevant for effective leadership such as self regulation, including attention regulation, emotion regulation and self-awareness leading to improved relationship with employees, improved communication and less psychological stress. Although there might be good reasons to link mindfulness to leadership, mindful leadership has not yet been defined.

As medical specialists often have to balance their leadership role with being a physician, a course 'mindful leadership' was developed to support them in coping with stress, and support to improve their well-being and leadership behavior.

This research aims to qualitatively explore the effects of this mindful leadership course on leadership and to conceptualize Mindful Leadership.

Methods: This is a qualitative in-depth face-to-face interview design, in which a subsample of participants in the course mindful leadership for medical specialists were interviewed 12-18 months year after their participation in the course. Eighteen face-to-face interviews were conducted, to qualitatively explore the perceived effects of a course mindful leadership. Interviews were transcribed and coded. The research team consisting of four researchers grouped the codes into subthemes and themes and discussed until consensus was reached.

Results: The themes that arose from the data could be divided into four different categories Self-Being, Self-Doing, Other –Being and Other-Doing. The themes in Being described attitudes of the leader either to oneself or to others for example being open minded and non-judgmental. The themes in Doing described behavior either to oneself or others like standing up for oneself or providing direction. These categories and themes -including how these contribute to the definition of 'Mindful Leadership'- will be discussed.

Discussion and conclusion: The effects that medical specialists experienced after a Mindful Leadership course consisted of attitudes (being) as well as concrete behavior and actions (doing) are also described by Lyddy and Good. To our knowledge is this the first study that conceptualized mindful leadership. Future research should focus on other types of leaders and should involve employee's perspectives.



How does mindfulness training develop the critical leadership capacities of resilience, collaboration and complexity leadership - and is practice feasible?

Megan Reitz, Michael Chaskalson

Ashridge Education, Hult International Business School, Berkhamsted, United Kingdom

Background and objectives: Three capacities are frequently referred to as critical for leadership in the 21st Century: resilience, collaboration and leading in complex contexts. We wanted to explore whether mindfulness training and practice could develop these capacities sustainably. Additionally, we wanted to study how participants in leadership roles experienced mindfulness practice, how they applied their new skills to their leadership role and whether they continued with practice after the programme finished.

Methods: We conducted a non-randomised wait-list controlled study with 57 senior leaders who undertook an eight-week 'Mindful Leader' training programme. Additionally, through a multi-methods approach including recorded group discussions, interviews and surveys conducted 3 and 12 months post programme, we studied the quantity and experience of mindfulness practice, the application of mindfulness to leadership and perceptions of the programme's impact.

Results: Our findings suggest the programme was effective in developing these three capacities. The amount of home practice undertaken was associated with improvements in mindfulness, resilience and collaboration. Ten minutes or more of daily practice significantly predicted increases in mindfulness and resilience. Reports from participants showed they found the programme was beneficial for them as leaders and this perception was still held after a year. The majority of respondents were practicing at least weekly one year later.

Discussion and conclusion: Qualitative data regarding participant application and outcomes enabled us to develop a theory of mindful leadership. Allowing, Inquiry and Meta-awareness (AIM) created a space for response rather than reaction. This in turn assisted improvements in a number of skills which link to the three capacities under investigation. Our study therefore gives us insight into the effectiveness of mindfulness training in leadership development as well as to the mechanisms at play. Our study supports other research suggesting regular practice is essential for outcomes and, importantly, with this population, practice appeared to be sustained.



The Wheel of Mindfulness: A Generative Framework for Mindful Leadership Development.

Elizabeth King, Richard Badham

Maquarie University, Sydney, Australia

Background and Objectives: The purpose of this presentation is to highlight the value of extending the range and depth of Buddhist-derived interventions by capturing and exploring the value of critical and collective approaches to mindfulness that derive from other traditions and schools of thought.

Method: In order to guide such a progression, this paper presents a “Wheel of Mindfulness” model that captures the different, and inevitably selective, lenses on mindfulness, and provides a generative framework for exploring and building on sources of controversy and debate. The framework is intended to foster constructive discussion and development of, and between, different perspectives. In order to generate such discussion, the kinds of capabilities and qualities that the different discursive arenas of mindfulness seek to create and the behaviors that they require are identified before outlining the principles of the kinds of programs that might be created to develop and integrate such behaviors and qualities.

Results: Using two axes to capture different views of what mindfulness is (individual or collective) and what mindfulness is for (instrumental or substantive), the Wheel opens up and provides support for, consideration of, and debate over, a broad range of mindfulness programs that are diverse, collective and substantive in character.

Discussion: Programs that shift interest towards a substantive and critical view of mindful leadership that, while it supports enhanced performance and profitability aligns more with initiatives to provide a sense of life’s meaning and purpose thereby also fulfilling aspirations for leaders to develop goodness through virtue-driven behavior.

Conclusion: It is hoped that this paper will contribute to the increasing sophistication, further development and constructive impact of mindfulness programs in organizations.