Agile Principles and Mindset is Transforming The World of Work: A Study in Estonian Organizations

Raili Laas, Estonian Business School, Yebisu Eesti

Anu Virovere and Marina Järvis, Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Science

Corresponding author: raililaas@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

We have always said that the world is changing faster than ever. In 2020, the world changed beyond recognition. The pandemic of COVID -19 has drastically affected every aspect of business and life. This has affected the way companies work. It has had an impact on projects, team productivity, and collaboration, as well as consumer behaviour has changed permanently. At the same time, new products, services, and experiences are still being sought, and companies are expected to be more socially responsible. Employees continue to expect their work to be meaningful and clearly targeted. Organisational agility is the ability to prosper in an environment characterized by constant and unpredictable change, especially during Covid-19 pandemics. Therefore, it is crucial to explore what way of thinking and organizational culture helped organisations to move forward and survive during such crises and turbulent times. **The aim** of the study is to understand how can be managed the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic by the organisations and to what extent have they used the agile approach and mindset to move forward and succeed.
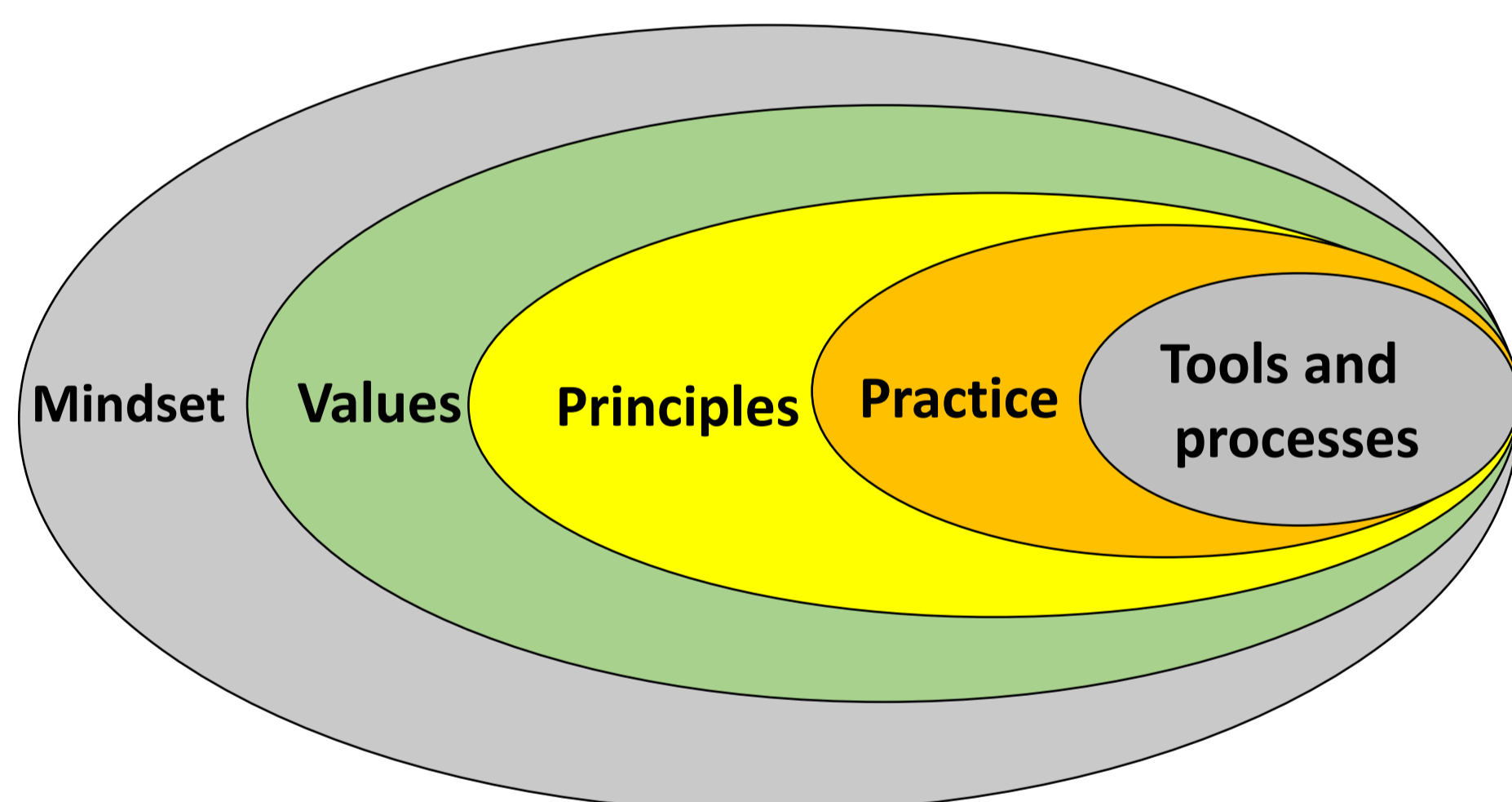

Figure 1. The connection between agile mindset, values, priciples, practice and tools, processes. Measey, 2015

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented on based of the values of Agile Manifesto. In addition, the positive experiences of organizations during the pandemic period are highlighted. In the following are presented the elements of agility that were reflected in the mindset and the ways of acting of the interviewed organizations:

Responding to change

- Focus on customers' and employees' needs
- Excitement and courage to experiment
- Crisis as an opportunity
- Trust as a core value

Cooperation with customers

- Focus on providing value to customers
- Changing customers' mindsets and needs

Working solutions, working software

- New solutions
- More informed use of tools to simplify processes

Individuals and interactions

- Clarity of purpose, clear common goal
- Self-development
- Learning from each other
- Open to feedback
- Cooperation with and care for each other
- Face-to-face communication

Positive experiences

- Learning, ability discovery
- A more creative approach
- The goals became clearer
- Distance working works and people can be trusted
- The unity of the team grew

METHODOLOGY

Based on the research goal, a qualitative research method, a semi-structured interview, was chosen, which allows to reach more hidden areas (mindset and experience). The semi-structured interviews were based on an open-ended interview plan.

Various organizations, both private and public, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, were selected for the study. The study interviewed leaders of organizations or middle managers.

The eight interviews took place online in the Zoom and MS Teams environment. The interviews allowed for open communication due to anonymity, and direct communication allowed for the collection of necessary information. The average length of each interview was 60 minutes. All interviews were conducted during March-April 2021, were recorded, then fully transcribed and analysed.

NOVELTY AND CONTRIBUTION

The current study is the first in Estonian organizations focusing on agile approach and mindset of leaders during the COVID -19 pandemic in order to move forward and succeed. The novelty lies in the way how leaders understand and use the agile mindset in the rapidly changing, complex and confusing situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study increased understanding of the management the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic in organization and the interrelation of different aspects, such as personality traits, people and teams, organizational culture and working environment, leadership and management. The study showed that this agile mindset and acting helped organizations to move forward and cope more successfully during the pandemic. The pandemic situation is not over yet, and therefore the topic of the master's thesis is actual, pointing out one possibility, how the organizations have managed so far and what kind of mindset and way of acting in a pandemic situation will help to move forward.

References

1. Business Agility Institute. (2020). Business Agility Report: Responding to Disruption. Available at: https://businessagility.institute/learn/2020-business-agility-report-responding-to-disruption/487 Accessed 4.10.2021.

2. Beck, K., Beedle M., van Bennekum A., Cockburn A., Cunningham W., Fowler M., Grenning J., Highsmith J., Hunt A., Jeffries R., Kern J., Marick B., Martin R. C., Mellor S., Schwaber K., Sutherland J. ja Thomas D. (2001). Manifesto for Agile Software Development. Available at: http://www.agilemanifesto.org Accessed 4.07.2021.

3. Manen, H., Vliet, H. (2014). Organization-Wide Agile Expansion Requires an Organization-Wide Agile Mindset. 48-62

4. Measey P. (2015). Agile Foundations: Principles, Practices and Frameworks. BCS Learing & Development Ltd. 11-13

5. Miler, J., Gaida, P. (2019). On the Agile Mindset of an Effective Team – An Industrial Opinion Survey. 841-849

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

- The main priority is human health and well-being.
- Cooperation and interaction have come to the forefront of organisations.
- Organisations were more aware of the importance of providing value to customers.
- New skills, upgrading existing skills – best learning together and with support.
- Time for clearer goals setting – motivation and involvement in the organisations increased.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase equality in manager-subordinate relationships.
- Keep the vision and goal in focus in every situation.
- Involve more people because everyone is capable.
- Trust people and teams.
- Encourage conscious cooperation.
- Create a safe learning environment.
- Keep the focus on providing value to the customer.

BIONOTE

Raili Laas, MBA in Entrepreneurship. She has 10 years of experience in management position. This has been a induce for researching leadership in change. This all has been implemented in her International work as trainer and coach. Raili Laas' main subjects of practice are professional behaviors, mindset and significant learning.

Anu Virovere, PhD. Professor at the Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Science, communication coach, trainer. Anu Virovere is co-author of several books in management and indentureship. She has more than 80 scientific publications in social science and management. Her main research interests focus on value-based management, ethics of management.

Marina Järvis, PhD in Management Sciences. She is the Head of Science at the Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Science and an associate professor at the Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech). She has more than 20 years of professional experience in the field of social and safety research and she has published over 50 scientific articles. Her main research interests focus on: environmental and health economics, sustainable development, competitiveness of SMEs, knowledge management, social capital, quality of working life and wellbeing, risk management and innovation management