



# **Joining the Sustainability Debate: The Human Resources and Operations Management Perspective in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The key issue to tackle in this study is the empowerment of Human Resources and Operations Managers on how to confront the challenge of aligning the interests and needs of their business with those of the environment stake holders to achieve and maintain productivity and competitive advantage in their areas of operations. Sustainable development recognizes that growth must be both inclusive and environmentally sound to reduce poverty and build shared prosperity for today's population and to continue to meet the needs of future generations. This is a qualitative study using theoretical and conceptual methods that incorporate a bibliographical review to achieve the proposed objectives. The findings from this study includes the fact that sustainable development should be handled on the basis of efficiency with resources, and carefully planned to deliver both immediate and long-term benefits for people, planet, and prosperity. Sustainability refers to service and production processes that use resources in ways that do not harm ecological systems that support both current and future human existence. Sustainability measures often go beyond traditional environmental and economic measures to include measures that incorporate social criteria in decision making. The new knowledge workers who every organisation need to recruit and retain are the driving force behind an organisation and are those capable of producing designs and development to deliver products to the markets which are less environmentally harmful. For an enduring corporate sustainability, an organisation must recognise people, their value and promote their capability. For human resource sustainability to be achieved, therefore, the human resources policies and practices need to be integrated for sustained business performance and positive employee outcomes of equity, development and well-being. Therefore the intellectual capital of organisations is the knowledge, experience and ideas of employees which management attempts to codify and formalise to produce greater organisational values.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Human resources, Operations management, Empowerment, Intellectual capital, Knowledge workers.

## **INTRODUCTION**

According to Neves and Drohomerski (2014), the sustainability field has been growing rapidly in recent years as it gains importance in various sectors of the economy. As a result of these new trends in sustainability, the corporate sector has been under pressure to adapt to new market demands and trends (Gillet, 2011). The increasing value being placed on these issues in the corporate world, whether they fall within the environmental, social or economic context, has become a competitive factor that influences the strategies companies adopt and the way they position themselves, attributing companies with new roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, Jabbour and Jabbour (2009) points out that these organisations must contribute towards a reduction in environmental impacts from their supply chains, stimulating improvements in their partners' environmental performance.

Thus, in order to reformulate their market performance, companies began to incorporate concepts and trends in sustainability, while maintaining their commitment to monitor and measure performance. In this context, Vinodh et al. (2011) show that many sustainability practices have been adopted in order to contribute to sustainable development, reducing environmental impacts while still allowing for business growth. Additionally, Scerri (2009) points out that because monitoring and measurement are required, many indicator-based projects have become fundamental to adapting the organisation to the operations paradigm of a sustainable economy.

The goal for which Human Resources Management was created was to make it possible for any organization to meet its strategic goals by selecting, developing, maintaining, and effectively managing the human capital, being the most invaluable entity of the organization's three assets. It has been known for the human resources department to devise an interdisciplinary examination, understanding, and planning strategies of the human capital. However, the fierce international competition resulted from globalization, the worldwide emerging markets, and the technological advancement have created an urgent need for both private as well as public organizations to work out innovative and competitive management strategies consistent with the fast-pace changing marketplace where only the most adaptable, resilient, and customer-centred organizations can survive. In such an environment, the duties of the human resource leaders are no more just aligning the employees' performance with the organization's strategic objectives. Further, organizations have become in need of a Human Resources leader whose charismatic personality, well-rounded knowledge, and task-oriented performance would enable him or her to grasp the dynamic environment within which today's organizations operate: a know-how leader who can make the human capital take part in the formulation and implementation of the Human Resource policies which stem from and influence the workplace environment. Hence the dear need for human resources managers to be aware and be part of the global movement for Corporate Responsibility which demands that Companies as stated by COM (2001) and cited by Jones (2015, p. 4), are 'integrating social and environmental concerns in their daily business operations and in their interactions with their stakeholders on a daily basis'. This extends to organisations been Corporate Citizenship, and according to Andriof and McIntosh (2001) as cited by Jones (2015, p.4) is 'understanding and managing a company's wider influence on society for the benefit of the company and society as a whole.' Consequently, marketing management is billed to raise consumer awareness of environmental factor, and to achieve business success through the provision of environmentally safe products; human resources management which embrace the development of long term skills, and operations management which looks beyond the usual parameters of costs, linking resource efficiency to environmentally sustainable processes and procedures

### **Statement of the problem**

Governments and corporate organisations as the major players in economic activities do play substantial roles in environmental sustainability through the provision of environmental standards and regulatory framework to conserve productive inputs and quality of life, in an economic environment where such action is regarded as cost enhancing and detrimental to industrial competitiveness (Wilkinson, Hill and Gollan 2001).

The critical issue here is therefore to explore the importance of industrial and commercial activity to sustainability. According to Wilkinson, Hill and Gollan (2001), there are some challenges that include the commercial pressures from increasing environmental imperatives that include government regulation on environmental controls and standards, growing customer pressure for action concerning renewable forms of energy, and an awareness of the need to be a responsible citizen in the society.

Secondly, there are internal organisational pressures associated with the sustainability of human resources in an environment of increasing staff turnover, declining firm loyalty, increasing work hours and stress levels, and declining satisfaction levels. As a result of the human resource sustainability debate, the following questions may arise:

- How do organisations currently utilise and apply human resources?
- How can organisations be advised to re-define the ways in which they use their human resource in order to ensure human sustainability?
- How can employers balance the interests of different stakeholders in organisations while maintaining a sustainable work environment for employees?

### **Aim of the Study**

This study aims to explore how managers would confront the challenges of aligning the interests and needs of their business with those of their most important resource, people to achieve and maintain productivity and competitive advantage in their chosen industry. As the workers are coming to terms with the situation where loyalty and commitment are no longer seen to be rewarded, those individuals who have increase their marketability and employability through sustainability consciousness, are taking control of their future.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **What is Sustainability?**

According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (cited by Wilkinson, Hill and Gollan 2001, p.1492), sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. It was further stated by Sutton (1999) that for the concept of sustainability to be meaningful, therefore, it must refer to maintaining, renewing or restoring something specific, in addition to harnessing the ethical dimensions of fairness of trade-off between current economic pressure and the future needs of the environment.

#### **Sustainable Development - An Overview**

According to the World Bank (2013) over the past two decades, economic growth has lifted more than 660 million people out of poverty and has raised the income levels of millions more, but too often it has come at the expense of the environment and poor communities. This is happening because through a variety of market, policy, and institutional failures, Earth’s natural capital has been used in ways that are economically inefficient and wasteful, without sufficient reckoning of the true costs of resource depletion (World Bank 2013). It is further revealed that the burning of fossil fuels supported rapid growth for decades but set up dangerous consequences, with climate change today threatening to roll back decades of development progress. At the same time, growth patterns have left hundreds of millions of people behind: 1.2 billion still lack access to electricity, 870 million are malnourished, and 780 million are still without access to clean, safe drinking water (World Bank 2013).

Sustainable development recognizes that growth must be both inclusive and environmentally sound to reduce poverty and build shared prosperity for today’s population and to continue to meet the needs of future generations. It is efficient with resources and carefully planned to deliver both immediate and long-term benefits for people, planet, and prosperity (World Bank 2013).

According to World Bank (2013), the three pillars of sustainable development – economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social inclusion – carry across all sectors of development, from cities facing rapid urbanization to agriculture, infrastructure, energy development and use, water availability, and transportation. Cities are embracing low-carbon growth and public transportation. Farmers are picking up the practices of climate-smart agriculture. Countries are recognizing the value of their natural resources, and industries are realizing how much they can save through energy and supply chain efficiency.

The question facing countries, cities, corporations, and development organizations today is not whether to embrace sustainable development but how. From the perspective of the Stakeholder model of corporation, Freeman (1984, p.46) states that ‘Any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives.’ is a stakeholder. Freeman (1994) as cited by Jones (2015), further highlighted the following as the components of the stakeholder model:

- There are also multiple, interrelated, complex, uncertain and constantly changing stakeholder values and expectations.
- Shareholders (ethical investors), government, employees, customers, suppliers, media, local community/ies, NGOs, future generations?
- New role for managers is to be responsive to not only employees but to other stakeholders as well? From corporate social responsibility to social responsiveness (the capacity of a corporation to respond to social pressures).

This now brings in the issue of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the role been played by corporate organisations in addressing the issue of sustainability.

### **What is Corporate Social Responsibility?**

Faced with common global economic, social and environmental challenges, the international community is defining a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, which are being formulated by the United Nations together with the widest possible range of stakeholders, are intended to galvanize action worldwide through concrete targets for the 2015–2030 period for poverty reduction, food security, human health and education, climate change mitigation, and a range of other objectives across the economic, social and environmental pillars (World Bank 2014). Moreover, private sector contributions can take two main forms; good governance in business practices and investment in sustainable development.

Sustainable environment and natural resources management is at the heart of the World Bank's efforts to end poverty and boost shared prosperity. Biodiversity and natural resources constitute the social safety net of the poor, representing a food bank and often their only source of livelihood (World Bank 2014).

### **The Contemporary Environmental issue in focus in this study**

The issue to be focussed on in this study is sustainability and the management of human resources and this is an effort to contribute to "The Sustainability Debate."

According to the World Bank (2013) over the past two decades, economic growth has lifted more than 660 million people out of poverty and has raised the income levels of millions more, but too often it has come at the expense of the environment and poor communities. This is happening because through a variety of market, policy, and institutional failures, Earth's natural capital has been used in ways that are economically inefficient and wasteful, without sufficient reckoning of the true costs of resource depletion (World Bank 2013). It is further revealed that the burning of fossil fuels supported rapid growth for decades but set up dangerous consequences, with climate change today threatening to roll back decades of development progress. At the same time, growth patterns have left hundreds of millions of people behind: 1.2 billion still lack access to electricity, 870 million are malnourished, and 780 million are still without access to clean, safe drinking water (World Bank 2013). Sustainable development recognizes that growth must be both inclusive and environmentally sound (World Bank 2013).

According to Porter and Linde (1995, p. 20) ".....properly designed environmental standards can trigger innovations that lower the total cost of a product or improve its value. Such innovations allow companies to use a range of inputs more productively, from raw materials to energy to labour thus offsetting the costs of improving environmental impact and ending the stalemate."

However, the achievement of changes in operations and environment management would be impossible to achieve without appropriate human resources policies to develop the necessary technical skills within the organization through education, training and re-training (Wilkinson, Hill and Gollan 2001). Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) stated that education is an economic 'good' because it is not easily obtainable and thus needs to be apportioned. Economists regard education as both consumer and capital good because it offers utility to a customer and also serves as an input into the production of other goods and services.

As a capital good, education can be used to develop the human resources necessary for economic and social transformation. According to Wilkinson, Hill and Gollan (2001, p. 1494).

*"these capacities include design and development to deliver products to the market which are less environmentally harmful than previously, marketing management to raise consumer awareness of environmental factors and to achieve business success through the provision of environmentally safe products, human resource management which moves away from short-term 'slash and burn' strategy to the development of skills for the long term, and operations management which looks beyond the usual parameters of costs, linking resource efficiency to environmentally sustained processes and procedure"*

### **The Challenges before the Human Resource and Human Capital Managers**

Human effort makes the difference between success and failure. However, the significance of this fact is lost on many organisations arising largely from our traditional culture where people are regarded as

mere resources, in effect another kind of machine to be scheduled, controlled and manipulated in much the same way, hence the expression “Human resources.”

These are challenges before the human capital managers. Therefore, a major shift is called for to understand that human beings require harmonious relationships and management must exercise sensitivity to people’s feelings and take great care of their welfare. Management must be concerned with creating an environment that facilitates the recruitment, development and motivation of people. The value of human capital originates from competence (knowledge and skills), attitude (motivation and behaviour) and intellectual ability (innovation and adaptation). However, unlike other forms of capital, an investment in it does not lead to its ownership since people are mobile in response to the degree to which the work environment responds to their changing needs. The primary challenge Human Capital management has, is how to design internal systems that motivate the people, in such a manner it would enhance individual employee’s efficiency towards the attainment of the organisational objectives.

In conclusion, the purpose of HRM is to ensure that the employees of an organisation are used in such a way that the employer obtains the greatest possible benefits from their abilities and the employees obtain both material and psychological rewards from their work (Graham 1978). Various definitions of HRM where given, for instance, Storey (1995, p. 5) said “HRM is a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce, using an array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques.” In addition Buchanan and Huczynski (2004, p. 679) stated that “HRM is a managerial perspective which argues the need to establish an integrated series of personnel policies to support organisational strategy.

According to Senyucel (2009), although there is no consensus on the definition or the characteristics of HRM it can be seen from the definitions that HRM is a combination of people-oriented management practices that views employee as assets, not costs; and its main aim is to create and maintain a skilful and committed workforce to gain competitive advantage.

According to Baron and Armstrong (2007) the concept of human capital is concern with the added value people provided for organisations. As stated by Chatzkel (2004), human capital is the differentiation for organisations and the actual basis for competitive advantage. Furthermore, human capital theory, as observed by Ehrenberg and Smith (1997), conceptualises workers as embodying a set of skills which can be ‘rented out’ to employers. The knowledge and skills a worker has, that is which come from education and training, including training that experience brings, all generate a certain stock of productive capital.

Human capital is an important element of the intangible assets of an organization. The other intangible assets include copyright, customer relations, brands and company image. All these, but especially the know-how, imagination and creativity of employees, are as critical to business success as ‘hard’ assets. The significance of human assets explains why it is important to measure their value as a means of assessing how well they are used and of indicating what needs to be done to manage them even more effectively.

Moreover, Scarborough and Elias (2002) describe the concept of human capital as the most usefully viewed as a bridging concept because it defines the link between HR practices and business performance in terms of assets rather than business processes. Scarborough and Elias (2002) pointed out that human capital is to a large extent ‘non-standardised, tacit, dynamic, context dependent and embodied in people.

### **Sustainability and the management of human resources**

The contemporary business environmental issue focussed on in this study is sustainability and the management of human resources. Sustainability development is defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (as cited by Wilkinson, Hill and Gollan 2001) as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. According to Sutton (as cited by Wilkinson, Hill and Gollan 2001), for the concept of sustainability to be of value, it must be incline to the maintenance, renewal and to restore something of specific nature, which also in essence incorporate ethical dimension of equity and balance of trade-off between current economic pressure and the future needs of the environment. For the purpose of elaboration, figure 1 below depicts the factors and influences that surround human resource sustainability in an integrated approach.



*Figure 1: Factors and influences in human resource sustainability – an integrated approach.*  
 Source: Gollan (2000, p. 60)

Wilkinson, Hill and Gollan (2001) states that the integrated approach suggests that for human resource sustainability to be achieved, the human resources policies and practices need to be integrated for sustained business performance and positive employee outcomes of equity, development and wellbeing. Consequently, the achievement of changes in operations and environmental management could be difficult to achieve without appropriate human resource policies to develop the necessary technical and managerial skills within the organisation.

Furthermore, the sustainability debate also raises a number of additional issues, however, for organisations to consider when handling sustainable human resource outcomes to support organisations' profitability and survival, in addition to satisfying employee expectations and needs in the workplace. Therefore, human resource sustainability requires the enterprise to recognise and place the appropriate value on human capabilities that would be holistic and integrative by its approach to people management.

Accordingly, developments in the field of Human resource management in recent as averred by Wilkinson, Hill and Gollan (2001), have shifted the emphasis away from 'human management' to a new focus on 'resource management'. It argues that the needs, potential and aspirations of individuals must take centre stage in the workplace. Therefore, if employees do not bridge the current gap between their rhetoric and workplace reality, then the likely outcome will be an exodus of bright and enthusiastic people to organisations that do. For true corporate sustainability, an organisation must recognise value and promote the capability of its people. This view is reinforced by Gollan (2000) who said that for human resource sustainability to be achieved, therefore, the human resource policies and practices need to be integrated for sustained business performance and positive employee outcomes of equity, development and well-being.

## **2.7 The advent of the 'knowledge Workers**

With the growing emphasis on customer-quality consciousness in the global business environment and the increased use of new technologies, a new form of worker has emerged from the cost-cutting

and down-sizing regime of the 1980s and the 1990s. According to De Lacy (1999), these new workers are often labelled as “knowledge workers” and they possess certain key characteristics amongst which is that they are highly skilled, qualified, trained and experienced in new and growing areas of business. Importantly, they can be defined as workers who deal with a high degree of complexity and uncertainty which requires a high degree of judgement. Moreover, in the new knowledge-based society of the 1990s the notion of commitment has also been redefined to cover the maintenance of intellectual capital or the ‘corporate memory’ is now seen as dependent on employee commitment and satisfaction. Therefore, the intellectual capital of organisations is the knowledge, experience and ideas of employees which management attempts to codify and formalise to produce greater organisational value.

### Sustainability and Operations management

According to Neves and Drohomerecki (2014), Production/operations management is the process, which combines and transforms various resources used in the production/operations subsystem of the organization into value added product/services in a controlled manner as per the policies of the organization. Therefore, it is that part of an organization, which is concerned with the transformation of a range of inputs into the required (products/services) having the requisite quality level. The set of interrelated management activities, which are involved in manufacturing certain products, is called as production management. If the same concept is extended to services management, then the corresponding set of management activities is called as operations management.

On the historical evolution of production and operations management, for over two centuries’ operations and production management has been recognised as an important factor in a country’s economic growth. The traditional view of manufacturing management began in eighteenth century when Adam Smith recognised the economic benefits of specialisation of labour. He recommended breaking of jobs down into subtasks and recognises workers to specialised tasks in which they would become highly skilled and efficient. In the early twentieth century, F.W. Taylor implemented Smith’s theories and developed scientific management. From then till 1930, many techniques were developed prevailing the traditional view. Brief information about the contributions to manufacturing management is shown in the Table 1.1.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Contribution</i>	<i>Contributor</i>
1776	Specialization of labour in manufacturing	Adam Smith
1799	Interchangeable parts, cost accounting	Eli Whitney and others
1832	Division of labour by skill; assignment of jobs by skill; basics of time study	Charles Babbage
1900	Scientific management time study and work study developed; dividing planning and doing of work	Frederick W. Taylor
1900	Motion of study of jobs	Frank B. Gilbreth
1901	Scheduling techniques for employees, machines jobs in manufacturing	Henry L. Gantt
1915	Economic lot sizes for inventory control	F.W. Harris
1927	Human relations; the Hawthorne studies	Elton Mayo
1931	Statistical inference applied to product quality: quality control charts	W.A. Shewart
1935	Statistical sampling applied to quality control: inspection sampling plans	H.F. Dodge & H.G. Roming
1940	Operations research applications in World War II	P.M. Blacker and others.
1946	Digital computer	John Mauchilly and J.P. Eckert
1947	Linear programming	G.B. Dantzig, Williams & others
1950	Mathematical programming, on-linear and stochastic processes	A. Charnes, W.W. Cooper & others
1951	Commercial digital computer: large-scale computations available.	Sperry Univac
1960	Organizational behaviour: continued study of people at work	L. Cummings, L. Porter
1970	Integrating operations into overall strategy and policy, Computer applications to manufacturing, Scheduling and control, Material requirement planning (MRP)	W. Skinner J. Orlicky and G. Wright
1980	Quality and productivity applications from Japan: robotics, CAD-CAM	W.E. Deming and J. Juran.

Source: Neves and Drohomerecki (2014)

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This is a qualitative study using theoretical and conceptual methods that incorporate a bibliographical review to achieve the proposed objectives. Ran and Leeuwen (2002) maintain that literature reviews make it possible to generate knowledge from research already published on the proposed theme being studied. Thus, this body of knowledge was developed by selecting articles from available databases that report on sustainable measures and practices adopted in the food industry.

#### **Case study as a research strategy**

Eisenhardt sees “case study as a research strategy and argues that case study attempts to capture the dynamics operating in a single setting” (cited by Mathew 2008, p.114). Furthermore, the clear benefits derived from adopting the case study approach in a study is that it could offer a total view of the phenomenon and by so doing it explains the relationship between parts of the whole instead of giving bits of information about the components of a relationship. Also Yin (2003) argues that case study, which falls within the qualitative tradition, is capable of explaining the ‘how’ and ‘why’ relationship. Nevertheless, some critics of the case study method believe that the study of a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings. Others feel that the intense exposure to study of the case biases the findings. Some dismiss case study research as useful only as an exploratory tool.

#### **Secondary Data (Deskwork)**

Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) defined secondary data as that collected by a researcher from already existent sources, with the aim of developing a project or research. There are multiple sources of these types of data which include: journal articles, books, online resources amongst others. To provide an in-depth understanding on the context of this research, a review of already existent data was undertaken, which also provided a rationale for carrying out the research.

Other secondary data used through sources of information such as Academic and professional databases (Emerald, JStor, Science Direct, and Google scholar amongst others) Books, Journals, and Articles. Newspapers and industry based periodicals/publications.

When searching for articles we adopted search criteria that included the publication period and keywords. Besides the search criteria (period and keywords), we selected only articles dealing with empirical studies, so that through the secondary data, we would be able to summarise practices and measures adopted in various case studies organisations.. The research strategy adopted for this study is the Archival research that uses data from administrative records and documents as the main sources of data for analysis.

### **4.0 ANALYSIS/ DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

Human capital is the foundation of value creation in any organisation. This is because the human resource is so critical to the organisational survival such that it has, judging by the complex nature of the contemporary business environment, been acclaimed as the most important resources to any organisation. For instance, no matter the quantity and quality of the non-human resources available to any organisation, they will remain idle and of no effect on the organisations desire for survival and growth. This is because the huge financial resource as well as the modern and sophisticated technology available to an organisation cannot ensure the survival of the organisation unless they are matched with entrepreneurial efforts, executive initiative and judgement, as well as technical competence, all of which are represented by human resources. Candidly stated, it is the human resource that designs, builds, operate the organisational structure and systems, decides and plans on the acquisition and utilisation of appropriate technology for the attainment of organisational objectives.

Therefore the human element is the most important and versatile resource available to any organisation. It is the only resource that is capable of thinking, planning, directing and coordinating all organisations activities for the attainment of its predetermined objectives.

Management must assume responsibility for strategizing, for choosing and modifying the company’s vision and mission, for developing competences, for validating the choices made, and for energizing the values and aspirations of organization members at all levels to sustain those choices.

At the heart of this process are learning organizations and learning persons. There is resurgence in the development of organization capability not only in management ranks, but wherever creative contributions to future competitive advantage can be sparked and developed. This extends beyond

training and encompasses appropriate incentives, careful career planning and placement, decentralisation, delegation, an open and supportive climate for learning, and the nurturing of team work and collaborative entrepreneurship.

The fabric of our (people) lives is held by organisations and as such, the quality of lives, either as individual persons, communities, or global societies, is determined by the extent to which one organization or the other is judged to be successful or otherwise. In other words, human beings are surrounded by a multitude of organizations and their activities affect the quality of the lives of people and also influence their behaviours. It also means that all organizations activities are goal oriented, and such goals are primarily to first survive and grow.

The survival and growth of any organization are however dependent, among other things, on the effectiveness and efficiency with which it acquires and utilizes its resources, the human in particular and others in general. This justifies the need for an effective management of the human resources of an organization in such a manner it would enhance individual employee's efficiency towards the attainment of the organizational objectives. This calls for evolving appropriate personnel policies, programmes and practices and to be manned in such a way and manner that would enhance the values and contributions of the entire work force.

It has been repeated many times by experts and practitioners that people are the most crucial and valuable factor production. The objectives of any organization can only be achieved if it has the right number of the right people. These people should be trained, developed, motivated, so that an effective team is formed in order to achieve the organizational goals.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

On the role of Human resources and environmental concerns, Human resources are the most valuable and unique assets of an organization. The successful management of an organization's human resources is an exciting, dynamic and challenging task, especially at a time when the world has become a global village and economies are in a state of flux. The scarcity of talented resources and the growing expectations of the modern day worker have further increased the complexity of the human resource function. Even though specific human resource functions/activities are the responsibility of the human resource department, the actual management of human resources is the responsibility of all the managers in an organization.

It is therefore necessary for all managers to understand and give due importance to the different human resource policies and activities in the organization. Human Resource Management outlines the importance of HRM and its different functions in an organization. It examines the various HR processes that are concerned with attracting, managing, motivating and developing employees for the benefit of the organ Moreover, challenges posed by the turbulent business environment, rapid technological changes, a diverse workforce, and the changing legal and governmental regulations also affect organizations. In this situation, a new role has emerged for HR function, as a value provider, as a key player in organizational working and as a contributor to organization's strategy. The specialist role of the HR professional takes a number of forms: the auditor's role, the executive's role, the facilitator's role, the consultant's role and the service-provider's role. HRM objectives should be in alignment with the organizational objectives, and should balance them with the individual and social goals.

HR policies, framed after determining the objectives of HRM, are described as a set of proposals and directions that guide the managers in pursuit of the objectives. Today's HR professional has a lot of challenges to face in the form of changing composition and attitudes of the work force, growing emphasis on quality of products and services and the quality of work life, fast paced technological changes, government policies, etc.

The HR professional has to gear up to meet these challenges effectively by being more innovative and proactive. Strategic Human Resource Management helps the organization in the achievement of long-term and short-term goals through optimum utilization of human resources. It involves the development of human resources objectives and their alignment with the organizational objectives.

To be and remain competitive, the organisations need to become more efficient in the overall production processes and systems, in marketing/sales strategies, in Total Quality Management (TQM), and in all aspects of modernisation of infrastructure to achieve quality standards that could match the demands of the competitive markets.

Organisations must also take a more holistic and integrated approach to human resources management and environmental concerns. Managers would need to reassess their role, specifically their responsibility in persuading their organisations to adopt practices that supports a sustainable approach. On operations management and Environmental Concerns, the global warming and pollution has had an increasing effect on how businesses operate. Stricter environmental regulations, particularly in developed nations, are being imposed. Furthermore, business organizations are coming under increasing pressure to reduce their carbon footprint (the amount of carbon dioxide generated by their operations and their supply chains) and to generally operate sustainable processes. Sustainability refers to service and production processes that use resources in ways that do not harm ecological systems that support both current and future human existence. Sustainability measures often go beyond traditional environmental and economic measures to include measures that incorporate social criteria in decision making.

All areas of business will be affected by this. Areas that will be most affected include product and service design, consumer education programs, disaster preparation and response, supply chain waste management, and outsourcing decisions. Note that outsourcing of goods production increases not only transportation costs, but also fuel consumption and carbon released into the atmosphere.

Consequently, sustainability thinking may have implications for outsourcing decisions. Because they all fall within the realm of operations, operations management is central to dealing with these issues. Sometimes referred to as “green initiatives,” the possibilities include reducing packaging, materials, water and energy use, and the environmental impact of the supply chain, including buying locally. Other possibilities include reconditioning used equipment (e.g., printers and copiers) for resale, and recycling.

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