AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLES OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN ACHIEVING THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Abstract:

The attainment of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is dependent on numerous components, which must be harnessed together and in the human resource management parlance, a core element for actualising this feat is through the human resource, as this is perceived as the bedrock and engine of any organisation. To this end, this study examined the roles of human resource development in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The study was premised on the ability, motivation and opportunity (AMO) theory as the theory helps in facilitating a lucid comprehension of the roles required of organisation in training its human resource, motivating them and presenting them with opportunities to come up with initiatives for fulfilling objectives 9, 11 and 13 of the sustainable development agenda. This study clearly and succinctly highlights the roles of developing human resources towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as well as the challenges, which may likely impede on the process of employing human resources in the attainment of these goals. The study dwelled on the AMO theory assists in the identification of green roles of individual employees and their organisations in their quests to achieving UNSDGs. The study concluded that sustainable development is an effective modern approach for forward thinking managers. Therefore, in contributing immensely to this global call, periodic development of human resource remains a panacea for making sure that employees are constantly educated to exhibit the required pro sustainability behaviours towards protecting the ecosystem.

Keywords: Human Resource Development, Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations, A.M.O Theory

Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is a universal call to action towards making the planet a better habitable haven for mankind; this universal call aims at promoting peace, tranquility and prosperity among all and sundry; this action therefore requires that all sectors of every economy irrespective of their type of business engagements should actively participate and

contribute immensely towards making this noble call a perfect reality. Due to increased attention and focus of being socially responsible and efficaciously ensuring that the quality of the environment is safe guarded; new goals have emerged in organisations varying from the traditional scope of mere profit making; these goals are viewed from the angle of organisational commitment to environmental and social activities, outcomes and performance (Elkington, 2019).

The United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda was brought to the fore at a United Nations General Assembly in 2015 and this agenda comprised sustainable development programmes and goals; the SDG target was set to achieve the uncompleted target of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); therefore, the incorporation of these unified goals follows a three dimensional structure of sustainable development which are economic, environmental and social; whose formulation were based on five Ps; namely, "people, planet, peace, partnership and prosperity". Explaining further, the aim of sustainable development goals regarding "people" and "prosperity" is the accommodation of the most suitable settings and engender the conditions for enhancing the development of efficient allocation of resources, sustained economic growth, collective prosperity and promotion of decent environments of work (Kiron, Kruschwitz, Haanaes, Von-Streng, 2020).

Now, from the business outlook and point of view, the superlative aim and intention of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to initiate an inventive, tenable, and sustainable economies centered on peoples' orientation and employment provision especially among women and younger generations.

The vision of the SDGs proposes that the environments of work should be healthy and employees educated to foster awareness on how employee proficiency can be better strengthened to advance productivity through citizens' proactiveness for societal development (Aguinis and Glavas, 2018; Jackson & Seo, 2019; Pfeffer, 2020). So, achieving the sustainable development goals needs the integration of strategy which will involve actors of diverse kinds ranging from the public and private organisations, governments, multinational corporations, NGOs, charity homes and organisations as well as individuals who will work collaboratively towards engaging in an eco-friendly production activities and promoting a toxic free environment for societal advancement.

Awareness on sustainable business practices for environmental revitalisation came as a result of the "green revolution" and preaches the need for prevention of ecological foot prints and being socially responsible using human resource development as a clear tool for advancing the green ideas into the business outlook. Thus, sustainable human resource development practices infer the act of reaching organisational goals without reducing the texture and quality of the environment in the course of business operations (Jennings & Zandbergen, 2016; Starik & Rands, 2018). To investigating the role of human resource development in the actualisation of sustainable development goals, this paper identified a set of interrelated human resource tasks, which have been captured in the managerial scope by firms towards the promotion of sustainable practices.

Conceptual Explanations
Human Resource Development

This connotes the framework for assisting employees in the area of skill development, amplifying abilities and knowledge for increased organisational efficiency and effectiveness. It also implies the development of an organisation's workforce through trainings, education, mentoring and coaching. It involves the provision of employees with the requisite skill and knowledge which is relevant to help them perform optimally and to grow in such area of specialty (Jackson & Seo, 2019). Development of human resource is an integral function of human resource management. This clearly explain that for the UNSDGs to be achievable, employees must be constantly trained on how to exhibit attitudes and behaviours that are in consonance with the SDGs; it is only by this that employees can help champion the SDG revolution and become proactive in its campaign. Hence, for this reason, human resource personal and organisational skills, knowledge and abilities must be well enhanced in order to affectively and effectively engage them as partners in the sustainability process (Zibarras & Coan, (2015).

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is an agenda which combines the socio-economic aspect from the environmental viewpoint based on the area of specificity of each country. The agenda on sustainability originated in December 1983 when the international commission on developing the environment was instituted in line with the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly 38/161. The goal according to this commission is the meeting of modern societal needs without infringing on the abilities of future generations in fulfilling their own needs. So, the theory of sustainable development serves as an alternative to the previous view of economic growth which has overtime ignore the high level of [production impact on the environmental texture.

According to United Nations, (1987; Arulrajah and Opatha, 2016; Paillé, Chen, Boiral, and Jin, 2017) sustainable development which is a call for environmental protection is a topic that is gaining momentum by the day and it's at the front burner of many debates due to the looming crisis that is posing too many questions about the future of humanity based on the continuous degrading of the environment in the course of production processes for economic gains. In combatting this menace, the United Nations at her General Assembly meeting made a global call towards preserving the planet which is our most treasured asset as humans; and in this regard, strategies were developed based on country's specificity. Environmental issues arising from work processes were one of the major focuses of sustainable development which was incorporated in the 1983 Brundtland Report. In 2001, strategies were put in place to promoting sustainable development in the European through the creation of the Ministry of Environment for sustainable development in 2008 and since this period, efforts has been continuously geared towards strengthening these strategies.

Human Resource Development and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: An Intersection

It is no gainsaying to affirm that there is a nexus between human resource development and sustainable development goals; even though there has been increasing debates to ascertain the level or correlation; human resource or any organisation plays a significant role and has huge amount of contribution towards the attainment of sustainable development goals and this is

because the human resource arm of any organisation is a strategic tool and an engine for attaining development.

Thus, developing and equipping human resources via training and education is imperative for awareness creation and awakening their consciousness for the smooth realisation of the SDGs. This is evidence through the shared relationship of interrelatedness which demonstrated that information on sustainable development can be adequately and effectively created, provided and distributed through proactive human resource development whose outcome would lead to positive environmental revitalisation (Guţu, Antonescu & Zaharia, 2019).

The features in the proposal of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals will help in sharpening organisations' mode of operations and enhance its relationship between internal and external environment of business by assisting to applying standards on how to ensure environment prosperity; this will require new approaches as instruments for fostering SDGs and developing human resource is a paramount and significant method in this regard for attaining the UNSDC set goals. Thus, managements are enjoined to reflect "green training and development" in their scope of thinking to adequately cater for the issue of sustainability. This 2030 agenda on sustainable development is an initiative of the United Nations standing as an extension of the Millennium Development Agenda and goals of 2015 (UN, 2013).

This agenda has a solid provision for human rights and its tenet is based on gender-based equity, status of minorities, issues that are critically centered on human resource development in relations to collaborations among government at the national levels.

Table I: Items under the 17 Sustainable Development Goals

S/N	Sustainable Development Goals
1.	Eradication of poverty in its entirety.
2.	Eradication of hunger, achievement of food security, improvement on nutrition, and promotion of sustainable agriculture.
3.	Ensuring of healthy life and promotion of well-being for all ages.
4.	Ensuring non-discriminatory quality education and promotion of lasting opportunities for learning to everyone.
5.	Achievement of gender equality and empowering all women and girls.
6.	Ensuring water accessibility and sustainability and comprehensive sanitation for all.
7.	• Accessibility to cheap modern energy that is reliable and sustainable for all.
8.	Promotion and sustaining of economic growth.
9.	Building adaptable and flexible infrastructures.
10.	Reduction of inequality among Nations.
11.	Making of cities and other settlement safe and habitable.
12.	Ensuring consumption and production pattern in a sustainable manner.
13.	Taking urgent action in tackling the impact of climate change.
14.	Conserving and sustainably usage of the oceans, seas, marine resource for promoting sustainable development.
15.	Protection, restoration and promotion of sustainability in the usage of earthbound ecosystems, sustainable management of forests, opposing desertification and reversion on land degradation.

16.	Promotion of peaceful and all-round societies for developing sustainability and provision of access to justice for everyone and ensure the building of a comprehensive society and an all-inclusive institution at all levels.
17.	Strengthening the mode of implementing and revitalising partnership globally towards development sustainability.

Source: United Nations, (2015)

Contextualising United Nations Sustainable Development Goals under the Purview of Human Resource Development: Roles of HRD on UNSDGs

For any effort that is geared towards advancing the frontier of developing an economy lies on human empowerment and development towards fostering prosperity on a broad spectrum; No matter the size of an organisation, there is a responsibility expected in the area of protecting the planet and this obligation rests heavily on the human resource to pilot and steer the ship of change (Kramar, 2019). The year 2015 was a turning point for the entire world when the 2030 sustainable development agenda which is a shared draft and layout for people, planet, prosperity and peace was approved and endorsed by all member states under the umbrella of the United Nations whose hallmark is regarded as the sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Guerci & Carollo, 2016).

A crucial and an emergency call for action is a 17 item interrelated global goals which spanned on a broad range of topics ranging from inequality, poverty, climate change as well as biodiversity; all these are expected to be actualised by 2030; hence, every element that make up an organisation has a significant part to play especially the human resource and this is because, this arm of the organisations is the bedrock and an engine for driving sustainability and sustainable firm performance (Guerci & Pedrini, 2013).. In the aspect of development human resource, the sustainable development goal prepare a structure for assessing the performance of organisations by professionals to help them better acknowledged and understand their remarkable and outstanding contributions and offerings concerning the sustainability of a fairer planet (Guerci, Longoni, & Luzzini, 2016). The United Nations framework of analysis at the global level of the sustainability programmes falls under three categories which are outlined as follows:

  i.   At the national and regional level, national policies hold sway over sustainability programmes.

  ii. At the enterprise, organisation and industry level, sustainable practices is a function of concerted efforts of various involved department; and

  iii. At the level of individuals, training is highly an efficient tool for the adoption of sustainability practices both at work and at home.

Challenges Bedevilling the Realisation of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through Human Resource Development

Imbalances on social and economic strands generated via growth patterns have reiterated the uniqueness of human resource development as a means for achieving egalitarian, comprehensive

as well as sustainable development and growth. Despite frantic efforts in the promotion of human resource development globally, endangered, improvised and countries which are disadvantaged continues to grapple and struggle with destitution, impoverishment destituteness, poor access to quality education, inadequate healthcare and basic services, poor access to quality education with increased level of illiteracy, uncontrolled rate of unemployment, increased level of inequality, prohibition and exclusion.

Irrespective of the degree of challenges bedevilling developing nations, the quest to ensure innovative ways for the promotion of human resource development by the General Assembly has been intensified towards the provision of opportunities to people especially in societies and countries experiencing high magnitude of destitution and indigence. In tackling the identified challenges, attention and prominence was placed on science, knowledge of technology, remodelling and creation of new inventions for strengthening human resource development.

Theoretical Anchorage

Theories are body of ideas and knowledge which are used in coherently explaining situations, events or phenomenon. This study employs the Ability, Motivation and Opportunity theory by Opatha, (2015) in elucidating on the roles of human resource development in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

A.M.O Theory

This theory is suitable for explaining the correspondence between human resources development and UNSDGs owning to the fact that the theory provides an in-depth understanding of the interconnectivity between the development of human capital (human resources) and its attendant outcomes on ecological and environmental performance. This theory explains the phenomenon under investigation from three dimensions, which are:

❖ the ability for engaging and contributing to green processes and the willingness of fostering an atmosphere that is eco-friendly both within and outside the work setting.

❖ understanding that provision of motivational strategies for societal activities is a collective effort which involves employees and their respective organisations; that is, while employees' concerns are to display higher level of commitment towards sustainability practices, the role of organisations' is to ensure adequate and commensurate form of compensation on pro-sustainable behaviours.; and

❖ Lastly, provision of opportunities for accommodating employees with decent environment of work coupled with a supportive organisational culture for the promotion of green behaviours and fostering involvements and green relationships (Opatah, 2015; Renwick, Jabbour, Muller-Camen, Redman & Wilkinson, 2016)

The AMO theory assists in the identification of green roles of individual employees and their organisations in their quests to achieving UNSDGs.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable development is an effective modern approach for forward thinking managers and management Therefore, in contributing immensely to this global call, periodic development of human resource remains a panacea for making sure that employees are constantly educated to exhibit the required pro sustainability behaviours that will help protect the ecosystem. Since the human resource department of every organisation is armed and saddled with the responsibilities of defining how objectives and goals can be attained, employee remain a driving force towards actualizing the sustainable development agenda and the onus for striking a balance between

economic, environmental and social elements requires that organisations should critically ensure that their employees are well motivated so as to encourage them to be mindful of how their activities may harm the fulfilments of future generation needs by ensuring that all components of sustainable development of the United Nations is properly enshrined in the managerial scope of bettering the environment through active and proactive participation in the area of corporate social responsibility.

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