
Green Management of Human Resources in Organizations: An Approach to the Sustainable Environmental Management

Rezaei-Moghaddam, K.*

Department of Agricultural Extension and Education, School of Agriculture, Shiraz University, Iran.

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Abstract This paper investigates green management of human resources and organizational performance towards sustainable environmental management. Explaining the importance of environmental impacts derived from organizational activities as well as attempting to create environmental awareness to perform green organizational strategies in order to protecting environmental sustainability is the main aim of the study. The paper tries to explain green human resource management and their impact on sustainable development. At first, the core components of green human resource management is explained. And then the environmentally friendly human resource practices and the preservation of knowledge capital have been emphasized. Based on the results, green movements to environmental protection are the key elements towards green human resource management. Finally, some practical recommendations to green goals in the organizations have been provided.

Keywords: Environmental management, Green human resource management, Environmental movement, Sustainability, Organizational performance, Green movement.

Introduction

The problems related to exploitations of natural resources are created to a great extent because of the pressure to produce raw materials for modern industry. The natural environment has become a site of discursive struggle arising out of alternative representations of the human-nature relationship and subsequently the organization-nature relationship and contestation around what the 'correct' relationship should be. Then, theorizing on the relationship between humanity and the rest of the global ecosystem needs to be explored more critically. But, those who believe that society has entered the age of environment have not put forward specific green theories on environment or on the interaction between society and environment (Hayati and Rezaei-

* **Coressponding author:** Moghaddam, K. R.; **Email :** dr.rezaeimoghaddam@gmail.com

Moghaddam, 2006). The result was the world environmentalist started discussing ecological issues globally.

The issues of environmental and social sustainability are firmly on the international political agenda and these two areas of sustainability are also now claimed to be a major concern for business organizations. Pressures arise when basic human needs are not met and satisfied by any available means whilst destroying the resource base required for sustenance (Youssefi-Khalajabadi, 1994). Then, companies now realize that they have to develop a powerful social conscience and green sense of responsibility. Sustainability challenges management concepts, such as performance, and frameworks, such as human resource frameworks, used by managers (Kramar and Hariadi, 2010).

Developing a management strategy to address an environmental problem presents risk managers with a number of complex, even daunting, challenges. Natural and human made ecosystems may be simultaneously straining under the pressure of human development, and analyses of them can be highly uncertain. Amid all this uncertainty, the manager must balance competing forces to find a resource efficient, technically supportable, and effective management strategy (Linkov *et al.*, 2006).

Human resources management and sustainability at the organizations

The more we highlight the ‘resource’ in the human, the more we lose out on the ‘being’ in him/her. We need to consider the special nature of *human* resources. Lado and Wilson (1994) define resources as all the input factors, both tangible and intangible, that are owned or controlled by the firm. They regard these as distinct from firm capabilities, which are defined as the dynamic, non-finite mechanisms that enable the firm to acquire, develop and deploy its resources to achieve superior performance relative to other firms, which includes culture, learning and routines. Together, they term these resources and capabilities organizational competencies. These resources are as those (tangible and intangible) assets which are tied semi-permanently to the firm. Barney (1991) extends this definition to include all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge, etc. controlled by a firm that enable the firm to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness. This latter definition would suggest that a resource is any feature of a firm over which it has control.

Three main types of resources have been identified: physical capital resources including plant, technology, equipment; human capital resources including individual knowledge, skills and abilities; and organizational capital resources, including the formal and informal relations among groups within and

between firms, and the controlling and co-ordinating mechanisms within the firm (Wright *et al.*, 1994; Barney and Wright, 1998). These definitions, either implicitly or explicitly, are based on the assumption that firm' resources are not neutral attributes, rather, they are features that add a positive value to the firm. Indeed, within the resource-based perspective, *relevant* resources are firm attributes that are a source of sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Conner, 1991). Other resources, therefore, are deemed not strategically relevant; some may actively prevent a firm from implementing valuable strategies, whilst others may simply have no impact.

Human resource management is responsible for managing, developing and retaining employees in the organization. 19th and 20th century was an era of industrialization, especially in Europe. Manufacturing large quantity of consumer goods, the factory system and demand for different products, the advancement of technology put lot of pressure on the natural resources of planet Earth e.g. exploitation of resources. Large number of human beings left their traditional businesses of farming, and were employed by industries. The result of industrialization was that the world community started discussing about natural resources, pollution, ecological imbalance and bio-diversity. The more extending the activities of the industries led to more employees in the companies. This led to the increasing importance of human resources.

The impact on human resource management systems will be explained on the level of human resource activities that are typically affected possible roles that could be taken by the human resource management units during the development. In other words, each environmental strategy has a unique impact on the human resource management system of the company. The impact on human resource management systems will be explained on the level of human resource activities that are typically affected possible roles that could be taken by the human resource management units during the development. Human resource managers are well positioned to play an instrumental role in helping their organization to achieve its goals of becoming a socially and environmentally responsible firm one which reduces its negative and enhances its positive impacts on society and the environment. With the knowledge of business impact on the environment, the firms will be more and more charged for its external pollution.

Human performance in the organizations

During the 1990s, resource based theory became an increasing focus of interest for HRM scholars, in view of what was regarded as a relative paucity of rigorous theoretical frameworks in the field. In particular, it was embraced as a

theoretical perspective that could enable a great understanding of the link between human resource management and organizational performance (Mueller, 1996). Most of the panelists have identified two kinds of 'profit maximization' behavior of companies. The first is the greedy kind, the second one is the responsible kind. The greedy kind of 'profit maximization' is the one where ethics, corporate social responsibility, and the concern for stakeholders other than the promoters do not matter. The responsible kind of 'profit maximization' is subject to ethical restraints, appropriate discharge of the company's social responsibility, and a balanced concern for the needs of all the stakeholders. The greedy kind is disastrous for mankind; the responsible kind is the future of civilization. This differentiation has enormous implications for our ideas about professional management. It means that institutionalizing ethics in business is as vital a function of management as, say, marketing; managers need to get as skilled in assessing and discharging corporate social responsibility as, say, in developing and evaluating investment proposals (Chakraborty *et al.*, 2004).

Various approaches have been developed to support the important influence of human resource management on organizational performance (Chew and Sharma, 2005). Studies reveal a number of mediating factors that contribute to organizational performance. These include HRM's capacity to influence aspects of organizational outcomes, particularly individual and organizational capabilities which contribute to organizational performance in the short term and long term. HRM practices have been shown to further organizational performance by developing individual capabilities such as knowledge, skills, abilities (Daniels, 2003) as well as behaviors and attitudes. Based on the studies, the procedures of human resources management create new organizational cultures and innovations (Goll *et al.*, 2007).

It has been shown an organization's financial performance can be improved in a number of ways. These include addressing human/social outcomes by providing internal benefits such as developing capabilities, providing career opportunities, work-life balance programs and an ethical culture. In addition, addressing environmental outcomes of the business have been shown to positively influence corporate reputation and image (Brammer *et al.*, 2007; Turker, 2009). These practices contribute to organizational performance through improved employee perception of the organization, improved morale and job satisfaction, an ability to attract and retain employees, a greater sense of organizational justice and employee commitment (Peterson, 2004). These outcomes contribute to greater cost efficiencies through lower salaries, increased productivity, reduced turnover and lower recruitment and training costs.

Nonetheless, traditional command-and-control approaches are now widely perceived as ill-suited for environmental management problems (Durant *et al.*, 2004). Adaptive management, by contrast, provides a systematic tool for the dynamic linkage of environmental management with new information on ecosystem performance or social and economic priorities. In contrast with traditional management, where structures and systems are derived from a pre-defined strategy, the new workplace will seek to balance what matters for the company (its strategy) and what matters for the individuals (their life strategies). An organization's human resource function can be instrumental in facilitating a comprehensive approach for creating a culture of sustainability and environmental stewardship. As such, it is recommended that an organization's sustainability coordinator work more closely with the organization's human resource executive. It is important to understand that employee engagement is not simply the mandate of human resource. Barney and Wright (1998) go so far as to argue that those aspects of human resources that do not provide value to the firm should be discarded. The more firm-specific human resource competencies are, the greater their potential to generate rents.

Objectives: The purpose of this paper is to explain the importance of environmental impacts derived from organizational activities and attempting to create awareness to performing green strategies in organizations for protecting environmental sustainability. The paper will explain human resource management, green human resource management and their impact on achieving sustainable development through organizations.

Materials and methods

The study was conducted by reviewing archival documents and other related literature in the environmental management, sustainability and resource management areas.

Results

The green management of human resources

Like the public debate, the research about the environmental aspects and business strategy already has a certain tradition. There is three major streams of research evident. The first sought to conceptualize green marketing and green consumers. The underlying purpose in this type of research was to develop target markets for green products, but no common denominator emerged from the research. A second stream related to conservation related initiatives. These focused on engendering conservation behaviors and legislative initiatives

relating to such behaviors as recycling and reducing consumption. Again, no clear agenda evolved from the research. The third stream of research, however, began to focus on the more general area of sustainability. Here, the managerial orientation of previous environmental research was set idea for a more macro-oriented approach to the integration of the natural environment in marketing.

The green human resource management will play an important role in industry to promote the environment related issues by adopting it, in management philosophy, human resource policies and practices, training people and implementation of laws related to environment protection. The green human resource management will help the companies and their personnel to pay attention and use ISO standards, environmental issues and changing related organizational cultures, waste management and then more attention to public communities (Shaikh, 2012).

We can identify three core components of the green human resource management. The first core component is related to the development of green abilities and implies practices such as selecting, recruiting, training and developing environmental knowledge, and encouraging environmental management leadership. The second core component is related to the motivation of green employees and implies appraisal and rewards. The third core component is related to the stimulation of employee involvement and implies valorizing tacit knowledge, empowering employees, and creating a green organizational culture.

In the next definition, sustainability is as the long term survival of the organization (Boxall & Purcell, 2003). Organizations have been conceptualized as complex adaptive systems, actively searching for appropriate energy sources to create and maintain the complexity they need to produce goods and services, and also searching for knowledge both inside the organization and outside; the greater the diversity present in the environment, the more opportunities there are for such diversity to be organized into productive structures. The Green Workforce” including human resource strategies, culture, recruiting and retention, training, career path development and diversity. Based on Jafri (2012) five major platforms where sustainability principles can be applied in the transforming an organization to the wholly sustainable enterprise is as follows.

- The Green Products/Services Portfolio including waste and pollution management, resource replacement, sustainable designed adaptive reuse.

- The Green Workplace” including global locations, physical plants, ergonomics, virtual workplace, green buildings, environmental discharge, waste and energy, use and source.

- The Green Function / Process Model” including sustainability applied to traditional functions, enterprise-wide green process modeling to incorporate green practices and sustainable management.

- Green Management and Governance Principles including sustainability test, compliance, incentives, ethics, reporting and assurance.

A green organization is an organization that provides products and/or services that are aimed at utilizing resources more efficiently, providing renewable sources of energy, lowering green house gas emissions or otherwise minimizing environment impact. Green human resource management is the use of human resource management policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within business organizations and more generally, promote the cause of environmentalism. Green initiatives within human resource management are increasing as a result of mounting concern over global warming and the adverse effect of much business activity on the natural environment. Green human resources management refer to using every employee touch point/interface to promote sustainable practices and increase employee awareness and commitments on the issues of sustainability. It involves undertaking environment-friendly human resource initiatives resulting in greater efficiencies, lower costs and better employee engagement and retention which in turn, help organizations. Green human resource management is one which involves two essential elements: environmentally friendly human resource practices and the preservation of knowledge capital. Many organizations are quick to layoff when times are tough before realizing the future implications of losing that knowledge capital. Green human resource initiatives help organizations find alternative ways to cut cost without losing their top talent. The greening of human resource survey examines the types of environmentally friendly "green" initiatives that organizations are utilizing involving their workforce and human resource practices.

Facing the need of incorporating ‘green’ into the corporate strategy, the topic of sustainability is moving up on the agenda of most business leaders and management boards, whereas it generally stays awareness of most practitioners in the human resource environment. Greening is a holistic process aimed at smarter energy usage, low costs, low wastage using sustainable resources or recyclable materials for end results that are products, which are environmentally friendly. Studies have indicated that going green is economically useful, has a direct impact on bottom line profits where business is concerned and actually enhances return on investments. “Going green” is seen as taking any steps available to maximize out the sustainability and vitality of our planet (Jafri, 2012). In the green world the green human resource or people management function has sustainability at its core as part of its people

management and talent management focus and organizations engage with the society by aligning their agendas with it. Communities, customers and contractors all become equal stakeholders along with employees and shareholders.

Green practices carried out to assist in environmental waste reduction, while promoting and encouraging stewardship growth, better corporate ethics. Some green human resource management initiatives also make use of employee volunteering support environmental projects and to develop green initiatives at work. Where trade unions are present, green human resource management may involve consultation and joint working with union environmental representatives (i.e. union representatives who are trained to promote a green agenda at work) to advance sustainable business practice. Further works have examined teamwork and work–life balance as two interesting additional practices for achieving sustainability. Teamwork presents several advantages. It can promote friendly competition among members, as well as sharing of tacit knowledge. In addition, ‘worker concern for the environment is often a factor in employee morale and can be highlighted by participation in team projects that have environmental goal. ISO 14000 environmental management standards exists to help companies to minimize the operational affects on natural resources and environment, to comply with pollution laws and improve, using eco-friendly technology and producing eco-friendly products. It is a step towards clean human resources e.g. in many manufacturing (Shaikh, 2012).

Green movements as tools for green management of environment

A green or clean is any activity or service that performs at least of the following: recycling existing materials; generating or storing renewable energy; natural and sustainable product manufacturing (Jafri, 2012). A Green job is an occupation that (1) directly works with policies, information, materials and or technologies that contribute to minimizing environmental impact, and (2) requires specialized knowledge, skills, training or experience in these areas.

The Green Movement across the world gave birth to green human resource. The green human resources management is based on green movement related to protection of environment and save the planet Earth from future disasters. The green movement aims to create an alternative society through a federation of constituent movements (Youssefi-Khalajabadi, 1994). The green human resource management is the requirement of 21st century as day in and day out, it is reported in the news paper that because of the excess consumption of natural resources as a raw material by the industries and other commercial

organization there is tremendous pressure on the natural resources of planet Earth.

Green movement is a political movement which advocates four important principles, environmentalism, sustainability, non-violence and social justice. Supporters of the green movement are called Greens, adhere to green ideology and share many ideas with ecology, conservation, environment, feminist and peace movements. In India the “Bishnoi Community”, the traditionally lovers and protectors of trees and animals were responsible for green movement in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Green ideology emphasizes participatory democracy and the principle of “thinking globally acting locally”. The green movement encompasses the green parties of various countries and relies on the ideals of the larger Ecology Movement, Peace Movement, Conservation Movement, Environmental Movement and general trend towards environmentalism. The Green Movement in India focused on the environment related issues (Shaikh, 2012).

Rezaei-Moghaddam *et al.* (2005) argued that with the institutionalization of the environmental question, the role of the environmental and green movement will shift from that of a critical commentator outside societal developments to that of a critical participation in developments. So that one of the core features of green theory is emerging new positions, roles and ideologies for environmental movements in processes of ecological transformation (Rezaei-Moghaddam and Karami (2008a). Based on Rezaei-Moghaddam and Karami (2008b) Green Development Society (GDS) as an environmental movement with some committees carried out many activities related to agricultural and natural resources, environment and sustainable development especially in energy, material, environmental pollutants and biodiversity.

Discussion

Towards green organizational strategies

Environmental concern across countries has been a topic of study. The problems are created to a great extent because of the pressure to produce raw materials for modern industry. Then natural environment has become a site of discursive struggle arising out of alternative representations of the human-nature relationship and subsequently the organization-nature relationship. Then, theorizing on the relationship between humanity and the global ecosystem needs to be explored more critically. The issues of environmental and social sustainability are firmly on the international political agenda and these two

areas of sustainability are also now claimed to be a major concern for business organizations.

Environmental management seeks to balance human demands upon the Earth's natural resource base with the natural environment's ability to meet these demands on a sustainable basis. We need to consider the special nature of *human* resources. Each environmental strategy has a unique impact on the human resource management system of the organization. Human resource managers are well positioned to play an instrumental role in helping their organization to achieve its goals of becoming a socially and environmentally responsible firm one which reduces its negative and enhances its positive impacts on society and the environment. The green human resource management will play an important role in industry to promote the environment related issues by adopting it, in management philosophy, human resource policies and practices, training people and implementation of laws related to environment protection. Green human resource management involves two essential elements: environmentally friendly human resource practices and the preservation of knowledge capital. It is necessary green practices to assist in environmental waste reduction, while promoting and encouraging stewardship growth, better corporate ethics. The green human resources management is based on green movement related to protection of environment and save the planet Earth from future disasters.

Organizations are increasingly hiring a sustainability coordinator. The goal is to increase the focus on sustainability among the organization's executives, managers, and employees. Here, sustainability refers to focusing on both social programs (i.e. programs for both the employees and the community), and environmental initiatives. In many organizations, the sustainability coordinator has a strong background in technical, environmental, safety, and/or scientific areas. This unit or person might not possess the behavioral competencies to change the employees' and managers' attitudes and behavior to focus more on sustainability. Many sustainability coordinators have expressed a deep sense of frustration that their organization has not progressed far enough, fast enough.

One factor which could become a very helpful partner to the sustainability coordinator is the organization's human resource executive. The way that this is often achieved is by including the human resource executive on the organization's cross-functional sustainability council. The sustainability council could focus on both social programs (i.e. programs for both the employees and the community), and environmental initiatives. Briefly, some recommendations in the framework of job description for employees in the

organizations and new definitions of job duties related to green goals and sustainability are provided:

-The responsibility of the present generation human resource managers is to incorporate the green philosophy in corporate mission statement, human resources policies. It should also spread it with the help of training programs, in recruitment, etc.

-The organization's job descriptions should reflect the sustainability agenda and the organization's website and other research tools available for candidate access clearly outline its greening endeavors.

-The job title and chain of command must include environmental reporting roles and health and safety tasks, which staff is exposed to harmful substances/potential emissions (and their extent). Job purpose must contain a reference to sustainability, the functions of the job list the primary duties associated with the position and highlight the specific eco-aspects of the job and matching personal attributes to needed environmental competencies, i.e. buying-in specialist competencies via new hires or investing in training.

-The interview questions should be tailored to flesh out potential compatibility with the organization's green goals. The common sections of job descriptions can be used to specify a number of environmental aspects.

-These then should be explained in the organization's want **ads** reflecting the organization's commitment to sustainable development and ask that all resumes contain evidence that the prospects have contributed to triple-bottom-line enhancement in prior positions

- The evaluation of activities based on the philosophy of greening the organization so that ensures decline in problems.

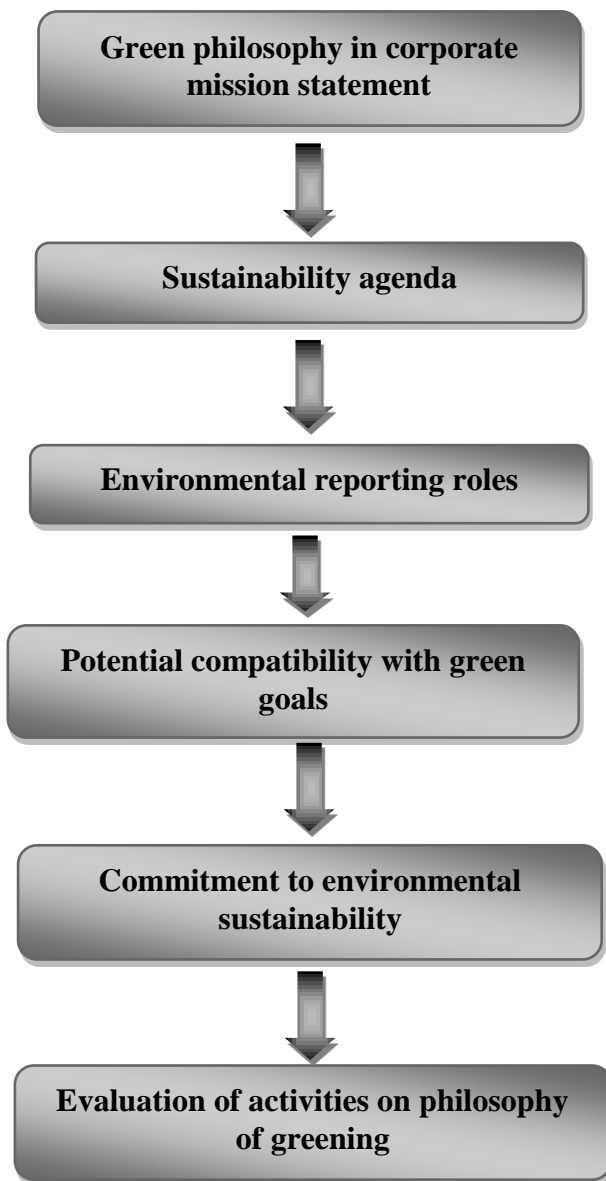


Figure 1. New definitions of job descriptions and job duties toward green organizations

People come in different states of readiness for advances for sustainability, or any change for that matter. People can be grouped by state of readiness and then you can tailor your change to each group as people generally

fall into one of three readiness groups. The first are those that have the value and the behavior. To advance the behavior we want to tailor the change strategy appropriately. Recognize this group for their behavior to encourage them to continue it. Second those that have the value but not the behavior. Promote, incentive and reward group B for behavior changes. Ensure that these “tools” are specifically designed so that the benefits are meaningful and the barriers to change are removed for this group. Third group those that do not have the value or the behavior. Leave group three alone. Do not cut them out, just don’t tailor their promotions, incentives, etc. to their needs. A large percentage of the third group will change their behavior once the second group has changed their behavior so that they do not stand out as the minority. The remainder of the third group will not change and they truly will be the minority (and perhaps a group you no longer find a fit with in your organization). If we treat each person with the same strategy we risk alienating group A because their behavior was not recognized, find less advances with the group two because the promotions, incentives, etc, were not tailored to them, and we can spend a lot of time, effort and money on group C and never see a return as their motivator is to not stand out. Environmental movements help high to identify and growth of these groups. The reinforcement of these groups is an important step toward green management of human resources in organizations.

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