



GREEN HRM: A ROADMAP FOR CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Greening of HRM has emerged as an important thrust area for management and a new key area in the field of Human Resource Management. In the 21st century, corporate sustainability has become a strategic imperative for all businesses. There is a growing need to do the corporate 'greening' in order to integrate environmental management into business. Green HRM plays a pivotal role in business for promoting environment related issues by adopting and following green HR policies and practices. This in turn, enhances corporate and brand image of any business organization. The area of green HRM has attracted the attention of many management scholars, business managers, employees and employers. Today, more number of organizations are responding and operating in an environmentally responsible way for becoming a viable and sustainable system. This paper seeks to provide the conceptual framework of green HRM, need for greening HR functions and highlights the process model of green HRM encompassing the activities concerning on boarding and acquisition of human resources, training and development, employee relation, performance appraisal and management, reward management etc. (from entry till exit process) to attain corporate sustainability and management.

KEYWORDS: Corporate, Green HRM, Management, Organization and Sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION

Green is in vogue. Being green is fast-becoming an essential constituent for almost all business organizations. Today, more number of organizations are responding and operating in an environmentally responsible way for becoming a viable and sustainable system.

Organizations are progressively transforming themselves into sustainable businesses for ensuring green activities in all processes, products, and manufacturing activities adequately by addressing current environmental concerns while maintaining a profit at the same time. Green management and related concepts have recently grown its importance in the field of management. Thus, this paper seeks to provide the conceptual framework of green HRM, need for greening HR functions and highlights the process model of green HRM encompassing the activities concerning on boarding and acquisition of human resources, training and development, employee relation, performance appraisal and management, reward management etc. (from entry till exit process) to attain corporate sustainability and management.

1.1 Concept of Green HRM

The field of Human Resource Management has changed drastically in the recent past. Human Resource department plays a pivotal role in shaping the organization's culture. Creating company's sustainability culture also lies upon the shoulders of HR managers. Currently, HR managers act as a partner for delivering the competitive sustainable growth under this green economy.

Green HRM is the use of human resource management policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within business organizations and more generally, promotes the cause of environmental sustainability (Mandip, 2012). It involves environmentally-friendly human resource policies and practices on one hand, which help organizations to achieve its monetary goal through environmental branding and on the other hand, safeguard environment from any negative impacts that might cause by the policies & actions by the organizations.

1.2 Environmental Sustainability

In the citation of Cohen, Taylor & Muller (2004), sustainability is often defined as the "ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (WCED, 1987). In the environmental literature, the notion of green management with regard to sustainability has various definitions; in general, seek to explain the need for balance between industrial growth for wealth creation and protecting the natural environment so that the future generations may prosper (Daily & Huang, 2001).

Currently, the present economy is a 'green economy' wherein, organisations are attentively addressing 'green' issues by responding well to the consumers, employee expectations, and the environmental changes on time. Under this green economy, only environmentally conscious organizations will be able to survive in this quest of sustainable growth.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Green HRM is nothing but the integration of environmental management into HRM. Green HR initiatives help the organizations to discover innovative and novel ways to cut down costs without losing their talented workforce. Now, companies are opting EMS (Environment Management System) as their strategic tool to gain cutthroat advantage in this competitive era.

Today, conscious organisations are boosting their employees to adopt eco-friendly 'green' HR initiatives for ensuring greater efficiencies, lowering cost, better employee engagement and retention etc. This in turn, supports every organization to reduce its own employee carbon footprints by the way of car sharing/car pooling, job-sharing, teleconferencing and virtual interviews, recycling, online training, energy-efficient office spaces etc. for attaining the competitive edge within the marketplace.

Rathgeber (2007) has also stated in his research that many business leaders are embracing corporate sustainability and green business practices as a way to improve their operations and enhance their competitiveness.

According to Justin Victor (2008), half of the HR professionals indicated that their organizations have a formal or informal environmental responsibility policy. Top three green practices reported by HR managers were encouraging employees to work more eco-friendly, offering recycling programs and donating/ discounting used furniture supplies.

A key finding of 'The Greening HR Survey' (2009), by Buck consultants, an ACS company indicates that 54% organizations incorporated environmental management in their business operations, 74% used web to cut travel costs, 76% promote reduction in paper usage & 60% execute wellness/fitness programs for employees.

Further, a report published in DNA paper on March 27, 2010 stated that 'Corporations are going the green mile', pin-pointed number of consultancies such as Gensol Consultants (P) Ltd., the Hyatt Regency, id 8 Media Solutions who have adopted green lifestyle practices for corporate greening.

Research by Suhaimi Sudin (2011) also highlighted that green management initiatives has become an important factor in forward thinking businesses around the world. Various researchers commented that employees must be environmentally conscious, motivated and empowered enough to carry out green management initiatives.

Aravamudhan (2012) explained that green HRM caters to reduce company's own carbon footprint by reducing the paper usage or unwanted travel. Green HRM is about the holistic application of sustainability concepts within the organization by its workforce. It has also been found in different researches that HR department in various companies are updating themselves by greening their processes in order to gain competitive advantage over others.

In nutshell, it has been found that green HRM is all about the holistic application of the sustainability concepts within the organization by its workforce for 'greening' corporate. In simpler terms, it deals with the HR activities which are environment friendly and promote the sustainable use of resources in the organizations. Some of the typical green activities include video-recruiting, the use of online or web to minimize travel costs or for selecting candidates. Green rewards can embrace the use of workplace and lifestyle benefits, ranging from carbon credit reduction to free bicycles, to keep people motivated in go-green program.

3. NEED FOR GREENING HRM

Sustainable HRM or Green HRM is all about the utilization of HR tools and creating HRM system for building strategy that contributes effectively to the sustainable performance of the firm. Since, sustainability has become the key focus for many organizations, adopting a green HR strategy that is concerned with the organization's larger mission and goals have multiple advantages and benefits for the company. Some of them are as follows:

- Green HRM helps in the achieving the organization's broader objectives by embedding sustainable strategy.
- It improves the quality of organization and ensures long term health and sustainability of both internal and external stakeholders.
- Green HR strategy promotes corporate social responsibility which further improves brand image of the company.
- It helps in retaining the top talented workforce because green employers have become the most preferred choice of the potential employees.
- Green HRM reduces the turnover. Sustainable companies are known to have lower turnover rates compared to their non-sustainable counterparts.
- Green HR cuts down cost and creates competitive advantages presented by the changing market.
- It increases employee morale and stimulates growth, innovation and creativity within the organization.

- Green HRM helps in developing the sustainable culture within the organization by adopting various eco-friendly lifestyle and behaviour.
- Corporate greening or green management can also be used as an effective marketing tool.

4. GREEN HRM FUNCTION AND PROCESS

Human resource department plays very vital role in translating green policy into practice (Renwick, 2008) and the creation of sustainable culture within the company (Harmon et al., 2010), therefore such green practices help in fulfilment of green objectives throughout the HRM process from recruitment to exit of an employee (Dutta, 2012). The key functional areas in process model where HR can have a green approach are as follows:

4.1 The on boarding process: Organizations need to focus on green recruitments for increasing their recruiting potential. With the help of advanced technology, organizations require less paper in all domains either recruitments or selection process. Resumes are invited and submitted online, company websites and online portals are used by candidates to search for jobs, which substantially helps in reducing waste generated from printing and mailing resumes. This process is not only paperless, but also makes one's career more accessible and easily shared with prospective hirers. Organizations can also use online portals for on boarding documentation such as offer letter, credentials and testimonials regarding qualifications and experience of selected candidates. Implementing these small practices diminishes the environmental degradation in real sense.

4.2 Sourcing and acquisition of human resources: HR professional needs to be watchful while designing the Job description and specification inclusive of 'green' component. HR Department can make green job descriptions and specifications for their employees; organization should incorporate environmental consciousness as one of the core competencies to map the environmentally conscious potential employees. In selection criteria, preferences should be given to the candidates who are 'Green aware', and the same criteria must be a part of HR acquisition policy. In general, green job candidates are efficient, talented, knowledgeable and profitable manpower who uses green approach/criteria in their personal as well as professional lives.

4.3 Induction: Besides disseminating the important company's information during employee orientation, induction programme of company should highlight its CSR objectives, green

statement and green concerns for employees' health, safety and well-being. Employee orientation programmes should especially be designed to harmonise the new employees into a culture of green consciousness.

4.4 Learning and development: To sustain in the race market, it becomes pertinent for every organization to change themselves as per the latest demands and changing scenario. Competitive edge can only be gained through learning and development. Extensive use of online and web-based training modules and interactive media should be exercised for all functional areas including the area of environment management. Green training needs to be imparted. Environment-related aspects of safety, energy efficiency, waste management and recycling can become the focal points of green training. Training managers should be more dependable on online course materials rather than printed handout for reducing the paper usage.

4.5 Performance management and appraisals: Performance management is an ongoing process of communication between manager/immediate supervisor and an employee that occur throughout the year for accomplishing the strategic objectives of the organization. Green performance management covers the issues related to policy, guidelines of the organization and environmental framework. Performance management systems (PMS) should include 'green' targets in the key performance areas (KPA) which can be translated into green performance standards and green behaviour indicators expected out of the employees. Hence, it becomes yardsticks in appraising their performances. Further, managers can create awareness and familiarization among employees about the green issues; stimulate them to engage themselves in green activities of the company and aid environment management learning within the official premises.

4.6 Compensation and reward management: Green Compensation and reward is another powerful tool for supporting environmental management activities which may help in the attainment of environmental goals (Milliman and Clair, 1996). Monetary, non-monetary or recognition based rewards can be used for green achievements of employees. In environment management, monetary-based rewards can be in the forms of salary hike, cash incentives and bonuses whereas; non-monetary rewards may include special leave, sabbaticals and gifts to employees and their families. Recognition-based awards can highlight green contributions of employees through company-wide publicity, praises and appreciation of green efforts in public by top level management.

4.7 Employee Relations: Promoting ‘eco-intrapreneurs’ is the key to attain competitive sustainable growth for majority of the 179orporate. Eco-intrapreneurs adds value to organization’s products and/or services by efficiently utilization the existing financial, human and natural resources.. Green suggestion needs to be appreciated. Green commuting habits like flexi-hours, car-pooling, free or discounted transportation passes, etc. should be introduced. 3R’s approach of Reduce-Reuse-Recycle resources should be employed. Companies are creating green workplaces which are environmentally sensitive, resource efficient and socially responsible.

4.8 Exit: For the strict compliance of the green strategies and policies, the companies should take certain actions as in when required. Unethical or environmentally negligent behaviour may constitute breach of contract and can prepare the possible ground for dismissal. Exit interviews should be conducted to gauge employee’s perceptions about the organizations green practices.

Thus, the process model of green HRM begins with recruiting prospective green employees into the organization followed by green training and development, green performance management and appraisal, eco-friendly employee-employer relationships that focuses on employee involvement and participation, green performance based pay and rewards and process ends with conducting exit interviews for those who leave the organization voluntarily or involuntarily. The major goal of green human resource management is to achieve the organizational economic and financial goals via environmental sustainability (policies and actions focused on minimal or no environmental damage).

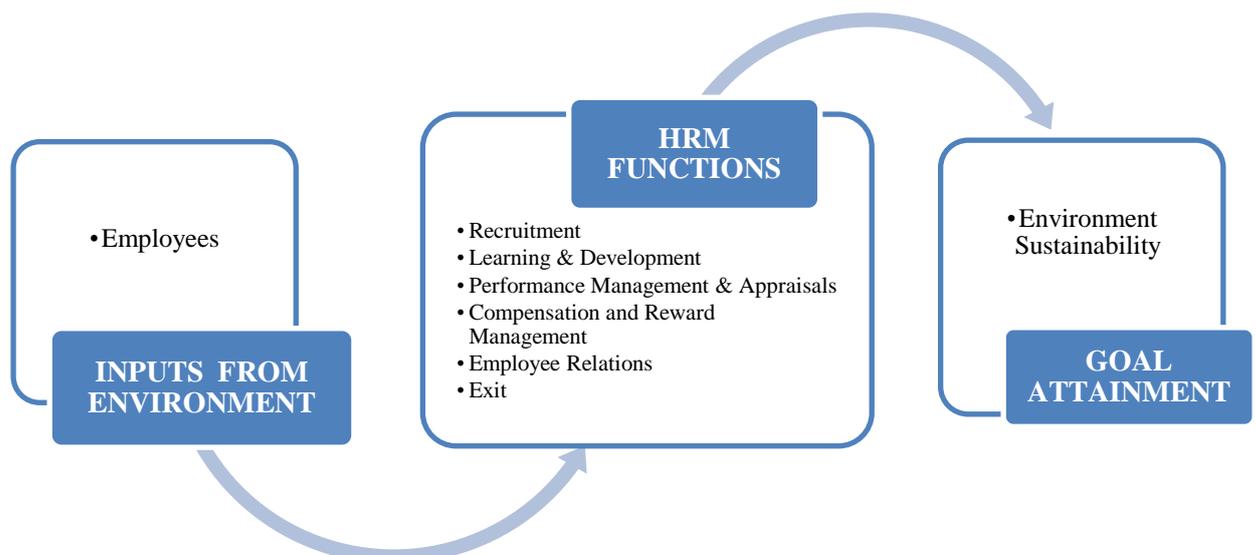


Figure-1: A Process Model of Green HRM
Source: (Uddin & Islam, 2015)

5. CONCLUSION

Green HRM is the buzzword now-a-days because of renewed interest in environment management. The area of green HRM has attracted the attention of many management scholars, business managers, employees and employers. Now, organizations have made sustainability part of their core vision, which links directly to their strategies for growth and innovation. In accordance with the business experts, sustainability is the only business model that will survive under this green economy, otherwise, companies will no longer be competitive at marketplace. In this 21st century, corporate sustainability has become a strategic imperative for all businesses. There is a growing need to do the corporate ‘greening’ for integrating environmental management into business. Human resource department plays a pivotal role in creating company’s sustainability culture. HR professionals manage employees from entry till exit and affects organizational processes widely. Since, HR is the trustee of the talent who conserves knowledge capital but at the same time, has to take ownership for greening the business by undertaking environment friendly practices within the organization. HR has significant opportunity to contribute for corporate ‘greening’ and plays significant role in encouraging their employees to reduce the causes of environmental degradation through green movement, green programs and practices, in order to retain the resources for future generation.

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