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The People, Planet and the Profits: Successful Cases of Sustainability in Organizations of Learning

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ABSTRACT

Organizations of learning, be it schools, colleges, universities, institutions, all exist to impart education among their members. They all work to make this world a better place. These organizations around the world have made it their responsibility to not only work for their profits but also ensure protection and conservation of the natural environment in which they exist while attempting to develop the people associated with them. The People, Planet and the Profits, this is what they focus on. The purpose of this paper is to show how different organizations of learning around the world have inculcated the Triple Bottom Line across their value chain activities. (Note: This paper is funded under the JRF scheme of UGC).

Keywords: Organizations of learning, Triple Bottom Line.

INTRODUCTION

Humans face a challenge in learning to live in a manner that does not endanger the Earth (Uhl & Anderson, 2001). This has led to the advancement of new concepts, including that of sustainable development as a basis for overcoming the environmental concerns (Mebratu, 1998). What if higher education were to take a commanding role, as it did in the space race and the war on cancer, in training students and furnishing the information and knowledge to secure a just and sustainable society? (Cortese, 2003). Several universities have begun the debate about the content of the concept of sustainable development and the ways in which they can incorporate it into their activities, policies and the organization (Weenen, 2000). (Glyphis, 2001) recommended connecting the Curriculum, the Campus, and the Community

to achieve sustainability in the institutions. (Sterling, 2001) identified that there is a necessity to enhance from transmissive learning towards transformative learning, which, in turn, requires an altered learning paradigm. Achieving sustainable education paradigm calls for vision, image, design, and action from all stakeholders with attaining healthy, ecologically sustainable societies. Educators for change need an improved knowledge of an ecological, participatory worldview from which an efficient ecological educational paradigm and culture could possibly be designed (Sterling, 2001). Subsequently, a sustained, perpetual effort to transform education at all levels is required (Cortese, 2003; Fien, 2002) and because there is also a belief and confidence in the role of education in generating economic and social development, if it does not lead the sustainability effort in the community, who will? (Cortese, 2003).

The higher education has undergone major changes in the recent past (Rathee & Rajain, 2013). The institutions of higher learning are mushrooming up and therefore, are under enormous strain to deliver value to the clienteles and other stakeholders (McClung & Werner, 2008; Rathee & Rajain, 2013) and sustainability of such value is challenging. (Uhl & Anderson, 2001) maintain that to address this challenge universities are in a unique position since their mission goes beyond education encompassing social action and they may call to embrace policies grounded in solutions to the ecological and social challenges of our times. They further ask what is an education for? if not to play an elemental role in how our society boosts forward in meeting its many challenges? A new window is, however, required to look at sustainability in higher learning i.e. from The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) point of view, after all, educational institutions are value adding establishments and making sure such value is supplied utilizing a sustainable approach and that the value so served persists to remain sustainable is imperative.

Defining Sustainability

The terms "sustainability" and "sustainable development" "rose to the prominence of mantra—or a shibboleth" (Daly, 1996) with the publication of the Brundtland report by United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development also known as "Our Common Future"(Dresner, 2002). The report defines sustainability as "the capacity of the present generation to fulfill its needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations, 1987). The ultimate goal of sustainability is the full integration of the natural, economic, and social systems, and this may very well be acquired by the integration these specific objectives (Mebratu, 1998).

The thought of sustainability calls for long-term economic progress in line with social progression and environmental preservation (Raja & Bhat, 2016). It looks at the transactions of this world from the 3Ps perspective i.e. People, Planet, and Profits. It not only requires ensuring long-term economic gains(Profits) but also helping in the socio-economic advancement of the society (People) and the well-being and security of the natural environment (Planet). In addition to this, the five core principles: respecting life and natural processes; living within limits; valuing the local; accounting for full costs and sharing power (Uhl & Anderson, 2001) help us understand it better.

Organizations of Higher Learning and their Value Chain

According to (Porter, 1985) value chain of an organization is "a representation of a firm's value-adding activities, based on its pricing strategy and cost structure". (Kaplinsky, 2000) defines it as "a full range of activities which are required to bring a product or service from conception, through the intermediary phases of production, delivery to final consumers, and final disposal after use". (Stonehouse & Snowdon, 2007) defined it as — "Porter's technique for understanding an organization's ability to add value through its activities, and their internal and external linkages, and allows managers to identify where the value is currently added to the system and where there is potential to create further value in the future by reconfiguration and improved coordination of activities". (Sison & Pablo, 2000) maintain that the myriad of tasks in a university can be assessed using a value chain which can be viewed as a network of activities concentrated around teaching, research, and community service, and on an individualized educational package of learning opportunities and tools that enables students in obtaining of target knowledge and skills, and formation of target attitudes and values. The figure 1 below depicts the value chain in organizations of higher learning which we have obtained by examining the contributions of various authors like (Hutaibat, 2011; Pathak & Pathak, 2010; Sison & Pablo, 2000; Van Der Merwe & Cronje, 2004).

The value chain in learning institutions may include two types of activities primary activities (which contribute directly to the generation of value) and support activities (which contribute indirectly to the generation of value by being assistive in nature of the primary activities). Support activities in institutions of learning involve Infrastructure (Hutaibat, 2011; Pathak & Pathak, 2010; Van Der Merwe & Cronje, 2004); Academic Support Services (Hutaibat, 2011; Pathak & Pathak, 2010; Van Der Merwe & Cronje, 2004); Administration/Professional Services (Hutaibat, 2011); Procurement (Hutaibat, 2011; Pathak & Pathak, 2010); Human Resource Management (Pathak & Pathak, 2010; Van Der Merwe & Cronje, 2004) and Technological Development (Pathak & Pathak, 2010; Van Der Merwe & Cronje, 2004).

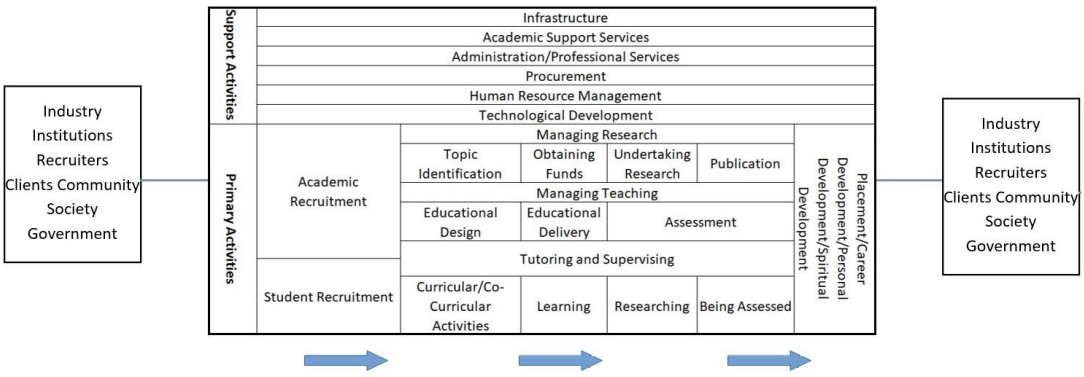

Figure 1: Value Chain in Organizations of Learning recreated from (Hutaibat, 2011; Pathak & Pathak, 2010; Sison & Pablo, 2000; Van Der Merwe & Cronje, 2004)

According to (Hutaibat, 2011; Pathak & Pathak, 2010; Sison & Pablo, 2000; Van Der Merwe & Cronje, 2004) primary activities include Academic Recruitment (recruitment of teachers); Student Recruitment (recruitment/enrollment of students); Managing Research (Topic Identification, Obtaining Funds, Undertaking Research and Publication); Managing Teaching (Educational Design, Educational Delivery and Assessment), Tutoring and Supervising (Curricular/Co-curricular Activities, Learning, Researching, Being Assessed) and Placement/Career Development/Personal Development/Spiritual Development. Each activity includes a myriad of tasks which cannot be discussed within the limits of this paper.

Various external entities are also part of the value chain viz. Industry, Institutions, Recruiters, Clients, Community, Society and the Government (Hutaibat, 2011; Pathak & Pathak, 2010; Sison & Pablo, 2000) which provide input(s) to the value chain and/or are recipient to its output(s).

The Triple Bottom Line

The concept of Triple Bottom Line (TBL) was suggested by (Elkington, 1997) in his book Cannibals with Forks. This approach to sustainability demands that an institution should certainly handle its processes and activities in a manner which not only guarantees earnings (Profits) for it but also develops the society (People) while doing no or less damage to the environment (Planet). These are generally recognized as the three pillars or 3Ps of sustainability – Profits, People, and Planet. This approach includes long-term economic growth going hand in hand with societal development and environmental conservation. It demands individuals, community and organizations to conduct business with the other entities keeping in view the sustenance of the People, Planet, and Profits. Overlooking any one of the pillars of sustainability while unfairly deciding and acting in favor of others results loses in the former which then shakes the gains of others of and causes losses to the latter defeating the purpose of sustainability in the first place.

Triple Bottom Line and Sustainability of the Value Chain in Organizations of Higher Learning

(Cortese, 2003)reveals that higher education stresses on individual learning and competition, which leads to professionals who are unprepared for cooperative and collaborative efforts. Consequently, learning is disintegrated, and faculty, responding to long-established and faulty incentives like tenure, research, etc. often get discouraged from outspreading their work into other disciplines or engaging in interdisciplinary collaboration. (Uhl & Anderson, 2001) uphold that university not only educate our citizenry with interdisciplinary information, but they are sizeable, prestigious, and influential institutions competent of partaking significant influences on the environment as well as some impact on local and global communities. A college or university would work as a fully integrated community that simulates social and biological sustainability itself and in its interdependence with the local, regional, and global communities (Cortese, 2003; Velazquez, Munguia, Platt,

& Taddei, 2006). There are many ways in which universities could be involved in sustainable development, e.g. management, planning, development, education, research, operations, community service, purchasing, transportation, design, new construction, renovation and retrofit (ULSF, 1999).

With the intention to show how organizations of learning like schools, colleges, universities, and institutions are addressing sustainability in their different activities and processes we make use of the Triple Bottom Line approach and look at the different activities along with their value chain. In the following section, we discuss as to how the primary and support activities in the value chain of many organizations of learning around the world have successfully been done sustainable using the TBL approach. We use examples from around the world to corroborate our argument.

Infrastructure, Academic Support Services, and Administration/Professional Service

At Brown University, USA, care is given to environmental awareness in administrative policies. It encourages departments/schools to consider the use of services and products that impact the environment much less than competing products considering factors such as energy efficiency, returnable/reusable/recyclable shipping materials and always trying to find a high percentage of post-consumer content - which is are materials that has served its intended purpose and has been discarded for disposal or recovery by a business or user (Brown University, 2017).

At the University of Puget Sound, Washington, USA university student workers run 'Sustainability Services' providing recycling services to the university help the campus community divert waste and operate in a more sustainable manner (University of Puget Sound, 2017). Around the campus at the University of Waterloo, Canada, the utilization of alternative energy systems and a reduction in energy consumption are fostered. Source reduction endeavors and the use of reusable components are employed in waste management. The development of an eco-purchase system that promotes sustainable manufacturing practices by administering all university business with environmentally responsible companies plays a significant role in carrying sustainability practices into the community. Moreover, a system of facility auditing has been implemented and university systems are encouraged to develop their own concepts of sustainability (University of Waterloo, 2016).

Procurement

At the University of Edinburgh, the University's Procurement Office works in tandem with the University's Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS), on a program of work on socially conscientious and sustainable procurement (Business Partnership, 2017). At University of Oxford, UK, the Sustainable Procurement Strategy has been created to ensure that all staff involved in the procurement of goods and services constantly consider how they can enhance and protect the shared environment, contribute to the health and well-being of society and establish a sustainable economy through their procurement decisions (University of Oxford, 2017). The University of Bath, England, considers what impact they

have on society, the economy and the natural environment when they buy goods, services and works. It has a Sustainable Procurement Policy which has been developed in consultation with the University's Sustainability & Carbon Management Steering Group and a Sustainable Procurement Action Plan which details their approach to developing sustainable procurement practice into their pre-existing processes and procurement activity. The university has engaged with the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) to use the CIPS Sustainability Index as a key part of the ongoing management of their suppliers (University of Bath, 2017).

Human Resource Management

Carleton University, Canada, encourages its employees to use the 'Employee Sustainability Guide' to help you make eco-friendly choices throughout their workday. Moreover, it runs a program referred to as 'Eco Reps' which is a network of staff volunteers with an interest in sustainability issues. This program provides staff members with opportunities to influence positive changes in their workplaces and help the University to fully embed sustainability procedures across the campus (Carleton University, 2017). At Harvard University, USA, staff members perform a notable part in generating solutions that create real results. At the university 'Sustainability champions' are identified, part of the annual Harvard Heroes program (Harvard University, 2017). Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria, houses Competence Center for Sustainability which is working several research projects focusing on: Human Rights; Comparative Age Management and Age Images; Employee Well-Being; Green HRM; Spirituality, and Religion; Staffing in Corporate Responsibility Jobs and Sustainable Careers (Vienna University of Economics and Business, 2017).

Centre for Sustainable Human Resource Management and Wellbeing established at the Australian Catholic University, Australia, attempts to grapple with the relationship between HRM practices and outcomes beyond mainly economic and financial outcomes thereby advocating an extended number of metrics, including community well-being, quality of life and employee well-being (the notion of job satisfaction or 'happiness in the workplace') for sustainable HRM practices (Australian Catholic University, 2016). The center, moreover, explores scholarly areas in the Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior domain through the lens of cultural, social, psychological and ethical inquiry.

Technological Development

The University of Arizona's Water and Energy Sustainable Technology Center leading-edge venue focuses on water and wastewater treatment and monitoring, alternative energy and related technologies (University of Arizona, 2017). The University of Vermont's LEED Platinum Aiken Center, USA, which houses the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources, is home to the Eco-Machine, which mimics the natural wastewater treatment means of wetland ecosystems to treat the building's wastewater. It uses communities of aquatic micro-organisms, invertebrates and wetland plants that work collectively to recycle sewage so that it can be used again in the building to flush toilets, reducing water consumption (Sustainability Degrees, 2014). Likewise, University of California San Diego, USA, has an

entire Energy Innovation Park, which houses a 2.8-megawatt fuel cell (the largest on any college campus), a sun-tracking photovoltaic array, a compressed natural gas fueling station and more through its system of weather forecasting stations, campus researchers and students use wireless meteorological sensors to collect data on temperature, humidity, rainfall, wind speed, solar radiation and more, and use this information to help in improving building efficiency, regulate irrigation needs and find new spots to install solar panels on campus (Sustainability Degrees, 2014).

Academic Recruitment and Student Recruitment

According to (Committee on Academic Programs in Environment and Sustainability, 2016) at the University of Michigan, USA, a Committee on Academic Programs in Environment and Sustainability was formed which submitted a report in 2016 titled "A New Vision for University of Michigan Academic Programs in Sustainability, Environment, and Society". It recommended the formation of School of Sustainability, Environment, and Society (SSES); the Program in Sustainability, Environment, and Society (PSES); and the Graham Sustainability Institute (GSI). In addition, they recommended the faculty and students to be engaged in such institutions and programs.

Managing Research (Topic Identification, Obtaining Funds, Undertaking Research and Publication

A faculty coalition at Northern Arizona University has developed a concerted effort to strengthen the sustainability effort on the campus, with the goal of reaching the greatest number of students possible. A five-year faculty development program, called the Ponderosa Project, resulted in 80 faculty members revising 120 courses in most disciplines to make sustainability the context for, or content of, learning (Cortese, 2003). At the University of Technology of Sydney (UTS), Australia, the objective of The Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) goals are to take on and encourage scholarly activity and research of the highest quality directed towards the identification of sustainable futures; to undertake research and consultancy work concentrated on social, economic, and scientific issues concerned with improving/quality of life of all social groups in ecologically responsible ways. In addition, the University of Florida (Hanrahan, Kibert, & Bosch, 1998) has signed a declaration offering to create ecological education and research a vital goal of the institute. Likewise, the Ohio State University, USA, provides funding for research, scholarship, travel and student projects committed to improving training, research, and innovation concerned with energy, ecology, and sustainability (Ohio State University, 2016).

Managing Teaching

At the University of Technology of Sydney (UTS), Australia, the mission of The Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) is to advise on the development of curricula at the UTS to ensure that UTS graduates are alert to issues of economic, social and ecological sustainability (Institute for Sustainable Futures, 2017). The Center for Ecoliteracy, USA

encourages the green schooling movement. The Center is best known for its work with school gardens, school lunches, and integrating ecological principles and sustainability into school curricula. It also offers books; teaching guides; professional development seminars; a sustainability leadership academy; keynote presentations; and consulting services on sustainability (Vanderbilt University, 2017).

Tutoring and Supervising

The University of Florida (Hanrahan *et al*., 1998) is coordinating an effort to ``green'' the curriculum, processes and research agenda by conducting stakeholder meetings, performing an environmental audit, reviewing courses for environmental substance, and creating educational publicity projects. The objective is to implant environmental knowledge into virtually every curriculum and every part of campus operations. Similarly, Student Sustainability Center at the Portland State University, USA, constantly works with the Institute to create prospects for student engagement and leadership like the latest Solutions Generator in 2013 that funded student design endeavors and facilitated creative student-led ideas aimed towards changing the world, enabling participants to learn about and work on sustainability on a local level (Sustainability Degrees, 2014). The University of Hertfordshire, UK encourages the development of curricula and extra-curricular activities to promote environmental awareness and obligation (University of Hertfordshire, 2015). Georgetown University, USA, is home to at least a dozen student clubs and associations addressing sustainability and environmental topics (Georgetown University, 2017). There are 45-50 student organizations or clubs at the University of California, USA, connected to sustainability and the natural environment (University of California, 2017). At the University of Arizona, USA, the Sustainable Arizona University program has 60-90 students per semester working across 10 committees on assignments such as the University of Arizona Community Garden, Greening the Game for additional sustainable athletics events, HydroCats to fix water harvesting in Tucson, Arizona, and the Energy and Climate Committee for student energy advocacy.

Placement/Career Development/Personal Development/Spiritual Development

The Department of Geography at Northumbria University, England has run a successful (and expanding) work placement module for a number of years now, which seeks to work with external partners and stakeholders to enhance the employability of prospective graduates, and to contribute to the capacity of the partner organizations in terms of selected mini-projects (University of the Witwatersrand, 2017). The University of Edinburgh is committed to providing students with work-based placements to apply their skills and knowledge, and improve their employability (University of Edinburgh, 2017). The university also has a ‘Sustainable Procurement Intern’ program where an intern is hired for 8 weeks to work with the University’s Procurement Office works closely with the University’s Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) socially responsible and sustainable procurement (Business Partnership, 2017). (Taylor University, 2014) considers

spiritual growth as an organic part of life together where Discipleship Assistants and Coordinators work alongside our Residence Hall Directors and Assistant Hall Directors to nurture and strengthen the faith of students through small groups, wing and hall worship and other activities.

Industry, Institutions, Recruiters, Clients, Community, Society and Government

Office of Research and Economic Development at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln collaborates with industry in the support of research, teaching, and public service facilitating collaborative activities like student internship and recruitment, research and development facilities, faculty consulting, Philanthropic support of academic units, research centers, programs or individual (Nebraska-Lincoln, 2017). At the University of Technology of Sydney (UTS), Australia, the mission of The Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) is ``to work with industry, government, and the community to create sustainable futures, through programs of research, consultancy and teaching"(Institute for Sustainable Futures, 2017). At (University of the Witwatersrand, 2017), Centre for Sustainability in Mining and Industry, collaborates with institutions, organizations, companies and independent experts to achieve its goals of research, analysis, dialogue, seminars, and events revolving around South Africa's mining industry.

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