

Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Socio-economic development of man depends on the environment and this development influences the environment.¹ Thus, environment and development are interdependent. Sustainable development ties together the concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social, political and economic challenges faced by humanity.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of personnel (workforce) and their families as well as of the local community and society at large, CSR is a link to sustainable development, businesses, feel that there is a need to integrate social, economic and environmental impact in their operation.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Corporate Social Responsibility, consumerism, Globalization.

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Introduction

Development has become an alluring word and carries such a wide as well as specific meaning that common man as well as specialist both can use it in their own contexts. In general usage, this word has been used in the sense of growth, meaning expansion in number or quality of the same or collection of goods valued high. It has, most often been proceeded by some adjectives, such as economic, social, regional, industrial, agricultural etc.

Now the concepts development extends beyond the economic growth and quantitative measurements of income, employment and inequality. It is even more than that. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development initiated work in this respect which was synthesized by Drewnowski. Drewnowski says “Development is a process of qualitative change and quantitative growth of the social and economic reality, which we call either society or economy.² Development is a welfare improvement, and therefore, those conditions and circumstances capable of enriching the welfare of the society are development.

The sole motto of any organization in past and at present is a sustained profit accompanied with survivability, stability and growth. So to protect the interest of the society and its natural environment Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plays a vital role. The relationship between Sustainable development and CSR has been discussed in this article based on secondary sources.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Thus sustainability is a function of social, economic, technological and ecological themes. Sustainable development ties together the concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social, political and economic challenges faced by humanity.

With regards to business sustainability it can be defined as the practice of maintaining process of productivity for an indefinite period by using resources (natural and human) and technology by greater value, without degrading or endangering natural biotic and abiotic systems. Sustainable development is a road-map, an action plan, for achieving sustainability in any activity that uses resources and where immediate and intergenerational replication is demanded. Sustainable Development coincides with further economic growth and human development in the developed and developing economy and society for finding the means of continual development beyond economic development.

Corporate Social Responsibility (Csr)

The globalization has not only opened the doors for companies to make their territory borderless but also to adopt the practices being practiced by different companies in different cultures, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is one of them. Some argue that it is an attempt to pre-empt the role of governments as a watchdog over powerful multinational corporations. CSR is more than philanthropy –or “giving back to the society” as some corporate see it. The role that companies should play in the development of the society and the economy, in which exists, differ substantially.

Corporate social responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to the economic development while improving the quality of the life of the workforce and their families and the society at large. In this light Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be defined as the social welfare responsibility of the business community towards a better social, cultural, economic and environmental development along with their organizational development. It mostly concerns about firm’s operational and strategic behavior towards the elements like³-

Health

Safety

Environmental Protection

Human Rights

Human Resource Practices

Corporate Governance

Community Development

Consumer Protection

Labour Protection

Supplier Relations

Business Ethics, and

Stakeholder Rights

Green Csr: A Sustainable Approach

An organization with a superior Green CSR programme is able to manage and report on the social and environmental impacts of its operations. Corporate responsibility is not just a public relation exercise, but a strategically fundamental driver that safeguards the interest of society and the environment along with business interest. Green CSR is the need of the hour. Green CSR is an initiative by organisations to pass the message of sustainable consumption among consumers, employees and

society at large. It all promotes green behaviour in society.⁴

Sustainable CSR - The New Corporate Responsibility

A corporate responsibility approach that demonstrated a company's commitment to sustainable consumption would include:

- Explanation of how the principle of sustainable consumption is shaping their business strategy.
- A focus on the company's product, through an environmental and social analysis of their key life cycle impacts.
- Pro-active engagement with government and NGO's in developing a public policy framework that creates a business case for more sustainable products.
- A research and development strategy that focused on beating the competition at product sustainability- in terms of supply chains and product use- alongside other consumer priorities.

CSR, Sustainability and Sustainable Development

In a more globalised, interconnected and competitive world, the way that environmental, social and corporate governance issues are managed is part of companies' issues management. It is part of a company's overall management quality needed to compete successfully. Sustainability refers to an organization's activities, typically considered voluntary, that demonstrate the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations and in interactions with stakeholders. The United Nations (2007) defines CSR as the overall contribution of business to sustainable development.⁵

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD, 2002) provides that CSR is the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life.⁶ Corporate responsibility or sustainability is therefore a prominent feature of the business and society. There are some people as well as organizations which feel that CSR is all about choice i.e. companies should have choice in following the practice of corporate social responsibility. Given this view, it will be very difficult to have this practice implemented and companies will not take any initiative to implement it.

In the era of globalization, CSR has become indispensable "The proper responsibility of the company will become as crucial to the world economy as the proper governing of countries. . . . strong feeling of corporate social responsibility produces good social progress, the two go together.

Conclusion

CSR aimed at encouraging companies to be more aware of the impact of their business on the rest of society, including their own stake holder and the environment. CSR is a business approach that contributes to sustainable development by delivering economic, social and environmental benefits for all stakeholders.

Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) is not a fad or a passing trend, it is a business imperative that companies are either beginning to think about or are engaging with in one way or another. While some of these initiatives may be labeled as corporate citizenship by some organization, their basic message and purpose is the same. A successfully implemented CSR strategy calls for aligning. These initiatives with business objectives and corporate values thereby integrating corporate responsibility across the business functions and enhancing business reputation, the challenge for us is to apply fundamental business principles to make CSR sharper, smarter for sustainable development.

References

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² Drewnowski, J., *On Measuring and Planning the Quality of Life*, 1974, Quoted by S.K. Sharma, *Environmental Issues and Development*, in Kalwar,S.C. (ed.) *Environmental Issues and Sustainable Development*, Pointer Publishers Jaipur, 2002, p. 9

³ globalissues.org.

⁴ greenyourbusiness.org

⁵ *Concept Definition of CSR* www.linkedin.com

⁶ *Ibid.*