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Ethical Practices, Eco-centric Business and Environmental Sustainability

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ABSTRACT This paper proposes that without ethical practices, no business irrespective of size, can hope to be sustainable. The researcher has examined how the business literature has addressed a range of issues such as for example social responsibility, environmental ethics and sustainable development. This paper thus looks at moral responsibility and the non-commonsensical scope of environmental business relations and considers business strategy and its role in global sustainability, and suggests the application of a transformational eco-centric approach to business activities. It is prescriptive in nature and thus normative since it suggests practical guidelines based on accountable ethical value. By adopting _ethical practices and by having ethically driven leaders, creativity and careful strategies in environmental matters, businesses will be able to generate wealth within legal and value-motivated boundaries which do not compromise the sustainability of future generations.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the world is becoming a global village in which what transpires environmentally on one side, invariably impacts others elsewhere. Globalization and the internet draw our attention to events which seem far away. The increasingly unfolding of evidence of what is happening on our planet, from an environmental perspective, and the negative environmental impacts are the primary concern issues. Environmental ethics as such, addresses the field of relationships between human beings and the rest of nature. It is thus an important approach to applied ethics. It interrogates our relationship with the world as a whole. Consequently ethical questions manifest which point to our responsibilities as global citizens and the manner in which we deal with environmental issues that plague our world. Essentially, when speaking of environmental ethics, we need to consider our moral and ethical relationship with creation. It is apparent from the literature that despite the critical role of nature in our sustainability, it is being used and abused far quicker than the earth's biosphere can possibly restock (Sutcliffe et al. 2008). How do we take care of and seek to preserve not only humanity but the whole of nature. For one, it is evident in the literature that ethical practices in business are receiving far greater attention than hitherto (Carroll 1999; Dahlrsrud 2008; Kolk 2010). How do we determine what is right or wrong in a given situation given that values are in part unique for individuals as well as different cultures?

Moral frameworks are increasingly being introduced into workplaces and manifest in organizational visions, missions and codes of ethics. Employees are made aware of the moral dilemmas they may encounter and the legal challenges to the manner in which they operate. However scant attention is paid to the real wielders of power including political interest groups, mega corporations and such like. The role of patriarchal societies and the extensive exploitation of nature (Warren 2000) are downplayed as is capitalism and its commodifying of things which are non-human (Kovel 2002). A large amount of work on global environmental affairs while not *per se* ethically orientated, tends to focus on how humans impact nature and it shows the extent to which powerful transnational forces and international institutions aggravate the manner in which humanity abuses the natural environment. As early as 1989, intellectuals discussed the moral issues which emanate from the way in which humans exploit nature and they protested about how humans systematically exploit nature with the resultant environmental degradation issues. What we require urgently is a range of effective proactive strategies to counter environmental degradation (Buysse and Verbeke 2003).

In international business practices, the notion of business and its relationship with the social order with a special emphasis on environmental ethics, has been in vogue since the mid-1970s when questions were increasingly raised as to how the growing population was impacting the environment. It has tended to focus on the manner in which people treat nature and how especially industries, technology, and the use of pesticides were affecting the environment. Organizations which do not strive for sustainability are in essence degrading the world for all of us (Buckley et al. 2009). Morf (1999) asserted that "Ethics is the moral principle that individuals inject into their decision making process and that helps temper the last outcome to conform to the norms of their society". When business leaders thus act unethically, they have consciously opted to be immoral. In businesses that wish to survive, their leaders need to embrace the legal and moral atmosphere in which they conduct business and create an organization which exudes an ambience of environmental concern and in which doing the right thing is part of the operating DNA. Such companies are environmentally friendly and adopt Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives voluntarily, but in some countries, CSR is legally obligated (Osuji and Obibuaku 2014). Sustainable development initiatives can also be established and categorized according to the assessment content of the technology selection that is made in a business operational measurement (Tyl et al. 2015).

Many companies simply comply to 'tick a box' and do not bother to act in environmental sustainability initiatives beyond mere compliance. However, there is increasing pressure from societies globally for organizations to account for their social, environmental and ethical evils which manifest in many of their operations. Nonetheless a truly sustainable organization is aware of the symbiotic relationship between the environment, and community and social aspects of its operations, and also its economic concerns and shareholder requirements. It is therefore expected to create a sustainable community via its various business actions (Buckley et al. 2009). It is true that countless moral issues arise with regard to the way people treat nature, and a great deal of environmental harm involves people being exploited and abused, through the manner in which nature is exploited and abused. People are most certainly not the only authentic moral proxies.

In 1978, McNulty and Cheeks (1978: 4-5) stated that "…the topic itself is hardly new…Much of the discussion concerning corporate social responsibility has focused on business in the United States, but it is increasingly clear that managers around the world are being faced with new problems resulting from societal changes". In addition, the huge damage imposed on corporate America by a series of unethically guided actions such as the EnRon, WorldCom, and Arthur Anderson scandals, have highlighted the need to reconsider business and how it operates as a matter of urgency.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Philosophical Stances

Businesses need to constantly create value for their shareholders and other stakeholders. This is why business leaders cannot meet the expense of being involved in ethical crises such as those which led to the global pandemic of ethical deterioration and very negative publicity which triggered the economic slump of the last decade. The environment is one area that cannot be compromised on or there will simply be nothing left of lasting value for future generations to enjoy. Even with this knowledge, there are still divergent views on environmental ethics. There are different values and approaches which impact sustainable lifestyle practices as espoused by both organizations and individual consumers. To many business leaders, environmental considerations are often perceived to be obstacles to profitability. They may even be analyzed as indispensable evils, with growing costs to be minimized, or tedious regulations with which they are obliged to conform. The environment is sadly often sidelined as an aspect which is not key to business strategy except for cases in which environmentalists and other activists create a huge fuss. Thus various stances are adopted of which the eco-centric value stance, the altruistic and anthropocentric are core.

The Eco-centric Stance

Environmental ethics tends to retain is focus on the human–nature crossing points and strives to develop persuasive reasons as to why we should care about nature in its own right. In this stance, there is a firm belief that the ecosystem has an inherent value and that this an important reason for protecting it (Nordlund and Garvill 2002). Within this context, human values are critical since these affect how we evaluate the actions that we take or events that we see unfolding before us. This leads to philosophical questions being raised. In the western paradigm, the Judaeo-Christian tradition, as well as in Islam, it is taught that the Creator gave people dominion over the earth's plants and all the creatures therein (White 1967). When there is thus a failure to protect the earth, some would say this shows human moral failure. An ethical duty of care for the environment and for all creatures is a substantial requirement for achieving sustainability. Environmental ethicists such as Singer (2002), have disputed the notion of randomness through which humans tend to confine those worthy of ethical consideration and they called for a spreading of ethical worth and value to the whole of creation.

Eco-centric management is essentially one category of CSR that assumes a intensely ecological understanding of how businesses should operate. The eco-centric model diverges from more human-centered anthropocentric and altruistic interpretations of sustainability or responsibility. It basically pursues the idea of protecting and improving the quality of the natural environment in which an organization operates. Eco-centric CSR is not expected to provide business huge financial benefits but rather reflects an organization's obligation to the natural environment as the principal core value for conducting business. Eco-centric business leaders and managers may thus dispute the use of ecologically damaging products, such as nuclear power. Eco-centricists, whether they be a business entity, or consumers, are markedly less apprehensive about material wealth and personal power. They basically embrace values that position nature in an equal position with people and are concerned with environmental overshoot in which nature's limits are traverse by rampant human development. Thus nature, for them, has an intrinsic value regardless of its usefulness to people. Eco-centrism asserts that the current dilemma of the world is based entirely on the hyper exaggerated sense of human worth.

A "New Ecological Paradigm" (NEP) exists in which the beliefs about mankind's capacity to disturb the balance of nature, and it also posits the existence of real limits to growth for societies, and questions humankind's right to rule over all of nature (Dunlap et al. 2000). There is then an anti-anthropocentric stance and a higher value is placed on nature. Milbrath (1984) stated that there is also great empathy for other species as well as peoples, and future generations. But critically important is the notion of making carefully crafted strategies to circumvent risks to nature and people in general. Milbrath (1984) also pointed to a growing understanding of the idea that there are infact limits to growth and a society is needed in which all role-players collaborate, are transparent in their dealings and are committed to preserving our planet Where there is a pro-environmentalism stance this denotes a range of sustainable opinion that is largely determined by attitudinal variables which comprise of the values, beliefs, and norms of people (Nordlund and Garvill 2002). Environmental stewardship is very important for any commercial growth and development, and yet only a few organizations within the global marketplace view stewardship as an important aspect for operational sustainability since anthropocentric outlooks dominate (Global Compact 2010).

There is strong understanding of the prospect of a global eco-crisis failing careful human activity (Dunlap et al. 2000). Eco-centricists prefer business strategies to be based on a total espousal of environmental principles between all facets of a business's operations. For example, they may favor the limiting of greenhouse gas emissions and more energy efficient businesses. Eco-centrists have a collective commitment to sustainable development (Dobson 2003; Seyfang 2006) which does not factor in financial issues when it comes to what is best for the planet. It is often the case that only when the government, media or local community becomes involved, that some organizations feel the need to consider greener technology use. Ultimately, it should be the spontaneous motivation of the organizations, activated by the market, that motivates them to attain a competitive advantage as well as sustainability through the carefully planned adoption of green technology (Garrone et al. 2016). Eco-centrists tend to attribute what they do to a strong sense of environmental responsibility. There is a constant conscious decision to limit any negative environmental impacts on others, by careful personal and organizational behavioral adjustments.

The Altruistic Stance

The altruistic value oriented individual desires a universalism and munificence approach which clearly considers the welfare and interests of all stakeholders (Elliott 2005). Treating others as you would have them treat you otherwise known as the 'Golden Rule', becomes an imperative (Stern et al. 1995). People who have altruistic values strive to provide ethical environmental value for all species as well as people and they tend to be supporters of businesses which happen to operate using sustainable practices (Schultz 2001). There are however also those who are against altruistic CSR which is considered to be an illegitimate corporate activity (Lantos 2002). Business organizations are not considered to be competent enough to successfully implicate themselves in public welfare issues (Shaw and Barry 1992) and similar sentiments are echoed by Freeman (2001).

This is due mainly to the fact that businesses are generally fashioned for narrow economic purposes that drive the notion of profit maximization for their shareholders. Society and its welfare do not necessarily feature in operating strategies and shareholder desires are paramount (Trevino and Nelson 1999). This flies in the face of the notion of creating shared value (Porter and Kramer 2011). The altruists believe that business voluntary generosity is preferred and is better than governmental benevolence which is invariably at the taxpayers' expense and thus by force. However in such a belief, there is scant recognition for the charge imposed on shareholders who obtain less and also the consumers who tend to pay for goods and services and even employees who may receive smaller salary increases due to organizational 'philanthropy'. Organizations do not always satisfy the needs of society and this evident in environmental degradation which is the result of business activities imposing severe fines on transgressors. In any event, altruists agree that organizations must give back to society is some or other form.

The Anthropocentric Stance

This group of thinkers have human-centered values and believe that environmental protection is very important because nature's contributes to the welfare of humankind (Nordlund and Garvill 2002). Such people generally prefer more sustainable lifestyles based on strong ethical grounds (Seyfang 2006). In business oriented circles one could argue that capitalism and its excesses and also patriarchy, are to blame for driving technology to plunder and pillage nature (Capra 1997; Kunstler 2005). A similar idea is proposed by Wilson (1988) who states that severe global environmental are predominantly due to the capitalist system of production, distribution and consumption and we need to appreciate and protect our biological resources. An anthropocentric worldview which is essentially based on a Western and especially a Eurocentric paradigm, asserts that people are superior to all other creatures and suggests that there is an unlimited supply of natural resources thus making conservation unnecessary. If there is technological progress is then there will also be material progress (Kilbourne and Polonsky 2005).

People can use technology and innovative practices to adapt nature to suit their needs so people do not face any ecological limitations. Purser et al. (1995) suggested restrictions to anthropocentrism, including the principal notion that it proposes no general survival plan. Dunlap (1980) referred to this view of the world as the "Dominant Social Paradigm". It also proposes a strictly non-interventionist economy and to the inviolability of individual private property rights (Albrecht et al. 1982). In this paradigm, what are considered to be hard and fast scientific facts are disputable such as for example, global warming and climate change due to greenhouse gas emissions (Myers and Simon 1994). There is also disagreement as to how to solve environmental problem in public policy procedures. In this paradigm, economic growth is unchecked until there is a total collapse of the physical environment and natural resources (Diamond 2006). Thus anthropocentrism, denotes an improper appreciation of the reason of individual human existence (Du Nann Winter and Koger 2004).

The Environment and The Poor

What is urgently required by organizations is a holistic and progressive approach to stakeholder engagement which emphasizes improving the integrity of businesses in the communities in which they operate. This means there should be a necessary transformation of the contemporary intellectual hypothesis regarding the manner in which business is perceived in society. Within this paradigm, it is imperative that environmental issues include and carefully consider the impact of the degradation of the globe on the poor. Given that nature is the medium for most human to human interactions and that most of the world comprises of what we term the 'poor', it is important to conserve the planet in ways that promote sustainable livelihoods and benefits with an explicit stress on poverty reduction and issues of social justice (Brechin et al. 2003). The poor lack the needed power to induce those guilty of degrading the environment that they are due some form of recompense for unethical actions, and they cannot thus transform the malpractices of guilty parties (Elliott 2005). Relatively poor countries become the dumping grounds for waste from richer nations and the poor very often have no defense against their leaders who accept payoffs to accept waste (Clapp 2001).

Many countries produce waste and are unwilling to pay for its local disposal. The result is often that the waste is sent to other countries. Thus many poisonous substances and even nuclear hazardous materials are sent from developed wealthy countries to developing poorer ones. Ironically, the United States of America, regarded as the bastion of liberty, is one such nation which has failed to ratify the 1989 Basel Convention which places restrictions on such unethical trade. The convention is equally flawed in its acceptance that waste traders can traffic hazardous materials through non-signatory countries and also export hazardous waste to signatories if any waste element can be reused as recycled material (Clapp 2001). It is thus not uncommon for powerful political and commercial interests to have priority over any form of needed environmental stewardship. It should be noted for example, that the average American citizen uses about seventy times more energy than a person in Bangladesh, and this relates to most other resources as well (McKibben 1998). Regulators and other stakeholders, need to make concerted efforts to support and promote the economic development of especially poor nations and the underprivileged groups within them, as well as all the individuals who fall victim to environmental degradation (Tarrow 2005) the whims of greedy organizations and selfish individuals. The poorer nations are in a sense under a new form of neocolonialism in which nations countries in the global South are obliged to remain underdeveloped so as to mollify the global North's apprehensions about global environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity (Najam 2005).

It becomes critical to consider impacts of business on the poor especially when it comes to issues such as mining and extracting of minerals, processing of goods, modes of transportation, the use and disposal of highly toxic materials, and other aspects. Consideration of these is important as they affect human rights, freedom, security and health and safety. Thus we see daily evidence of ecosystems being destroyed, water and air pollution, climate change and huge losses in biodiversity as our natural resources become more depleted. We view nature in instrumental terms and nature is loved for what it can provide people with, and not for itself. The concern of many is thus anthropocentric and fails to recognize the immense value of nature for itself. We are therefore faced with a myriad of very hard-hitting ethical decisions. For example, how ethical is it to burn fossil fuels which degrade our air quality and chop down the Amazon forest for furniture when it is the 'lungs' of our world? The many environmental issues we face including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and resource depletion, and also the significant societal and ethical scope of unacceptable business actions cannot simply be ignored if we are to be sustainable as a planet. In the context of protecting the poor, it is thus critical for consumers, for example, to be concerned about the environment, and sanction products and services that pursue conservation initiatives which seek to improve the environment (McDonald and Oates 2006).

The UN Secretary General report on the post-2015 development agenda stipulates a number of goals as consequence of the Millennium Development Goals. It stresses people, planet and then profits as a triple bottom line. It also stresses justice and human dignity issues and includes environmental, social and economic dimensions at the macro (economy/society) level, while explicitly mentioning intentions to end poverty, and fight against inequality while striving to promote safe and peaceful societies with strong environmentally friendly organizations (UN 2014). We can either advance the social reason for ethical conduct beyond mere compliance and the 'letter of the law' (Portney 2008) or move into the realm of the 'spirit of the law' in which organizations manage themselves in such a manner that they become not only economically viable and steadfastly uphold the law, but also seek the genuine welfare and sustainability of society (Carroll 1999). A spirit of stewardship is required by organizations in which they use the earth's resources in a responsible fashion and carefully consider all societal stakeholders interests and the heritage that is left to future generations (Worrell and Appleby 2000). There thus needs to be a fine balance between planet, people and profits in a triple bottom-line approach. The broader societal repercussions of organizational actions and societal expectations cannot be put aside. Business stewardship if viewed as an important response to the social and environmental demands for change, can enable strategic actions to inspire the values and beliefs of stakeholders and drive sustainable practices. There are frameworks and guidelines such as ISO 26000 which can greatly assist an organization in putting eco-centric CSR into operation and in promoting environmental stewardship.

The ethical climate in an environmentally friendly organization exudes care and is directly linked to deep beliefs, values and even assumptions (Denison 1996). The ethical climate then becomes an employee's guide and serves as his or her perception of the norms of the organization (Bartels et al.1998). While it is true that all people use natural resources and produce waste, the ecological footprint of the globalized rich is far greater bigger than that of the poor who are localized. We have a need to further encourage organizations to adopt an ethical eco-centric approach since it is their duty to care for the environment. An anthropocentric attitude fashions a condition in which business leaders and managers are inclined to chase after only the business interests of economic growth and shareholder value at the expense of environmental ruin. If eco-centric mind-shifts are not embraced, we will not be in a position to develop in a sustainable manner and the quality of life of all people both the rich and the poor will rapidly diminish. Sustainability is principally dependent upon effective management of the environment. Organizations thus need to be visibly environmentally responsible or else this will greatly threaten our ability to meet both the impending current and future needs. The Brundtland Commission of 1987 defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) and yet, for many organizations this is meaningless and they turn a blind eye to their ethical obligations. Organizations must figure out ways to work inside the limitations of natural ecosystems, apply transformational strategies and integrate eco-effectiveness and socio-effectiveness (Young and Tilley 2006).

A Holistic and Balanced Approach

Business organizations need to adopt a holistic and balanced, approach in which due consideration is given to the notion of the triple bottom line including 'people, planet and profits'. It is critical that governments and industries make use of effective environmental regulatory frameworks which also provide businesses with reasonable incentives as they strive to face complex environmental issues. Where there is a lack of commitment in regulation and monitoring of environmental regulations, organizations feel they can do what they like and so environmental sustainability and eco-centric behavior become compromised and the result is a degradation of the natural resources that are available. Corporations engaged in sustainability are launching various types of technological programs which have sustainable features, which may partly meet the requirements of social, environmental and financial responsibilities (Song and Zheng 2016). All organizational activity should be synonymous with the notion of ethical value creation and this should be communicated to stakeholders. Effective and regular transparent communication with stakeholders emphasizing eco-centricity will serves as an interface between organizational undertakings and societal interests (Crane and Matten 2010).

Organizations need to engage in meaningful stakeholder engagement an become involved in practices which include stakeholders in a constructive manner (Greenwood 2007). It is critical to developing and maintaining solid stakeholder relations with an enduring effort to consider them at all times (Habisch and Jonker 2005). Such an approach should invariably include considered stakeholder identification, ongoing consultation, effective communication, a spirit of dialogue and meaningful exchanges between all parties (Greenwood 2007). ISO 26000 principles for social responsibility describe stakeholder engagement as activities which are assumed to generate opportunities for discourse between an organization and its stakeholders with the purpose of providing an educated basis for the organizational decision making (ISO 2010: 4). Greenwood (2007) asserted that stakeholder engagement is generally morally neutral in orientation. However in business, it is the quality of the parties involved which determines the reasons for any engagement with stakeholders. Thus, any engagement with stakeholders is not to automatically be associated with responsible business behavior (Greenwood and van Buren 2010). CSR as a concept is somewhat elusive, and in the view of some intellectuals, term social responsibility is considered adequate since it means something, but not always necessarily the same thing, to all parties involved and it's not simply business related (Dyllick and Hockerts 2002). An organization could advance its corporate image by openly pinpointing itself with chosen themes and projects which relate to its particular competences. In such scenarios, word-of-mouth becomes an important aspect in stakeholder communications (Greenwood 2007). Eco friendly and ethically responsible actions and behaviors must be the central utility of an organization and it remains its task to educate employees and all stakeholders of the business on the value of eco-centric business. An eco-centric code of ethics should drive all organizational actions and decision making.

For a range of leaders and managers, CSR means a legal responsibility, philanthropy, social consciousness or liability while others view it as ethically socially responsible behavior (Kotler and Lee 2005). Irrespective of how it is viewed, CSR is dominated by an anthropocentric worldview and it requires a fundamental transformation in perception. Greater care for the environment is non-negotiable and if there are suitable and operationally sound regulations governing organizational behavior and the environment, these will create the needed level of importance, care, and responsibility to be attached to the environment (Ferrell et al. 2010). Given that environmental problems are rampant, effectively policed laws are critical to advance the notion of environmental stewardship and this is essential when we consider that most organizations operate in a wide range of contexts in which there are varying legal rules and standards (Brammer et al. 2012). Fines are not enough to prevent environmental degradation and are often ineffectual so what is needed is a mindset shift in which there are ethically driven practices. It would also be good to have solid ethical models and frameworks created which are especially suitable to particular industries. Understanding the different types of stakeholders, and the power they may yield and how they may influence and impact the business is vital. First and foremost is a desire to obey the law and move beyond mere compliance (Emerson 2009). The huge value of good relationships with all stakeholders cannot be over-emphasized, so that working in good faith is critical (Kotchen and Reiling 2000; Weinstein 2012). Adopting a values-based system of decision-making that allows managers and leaders to consider and carefully evaluate all stakeholder needs and wants is very important (O'Riordan and Fairbrass 2012). The more environmentally harmful stages can be identified and targeted for improvement so that every part of the value chain demonstrates the paramount importance of eco-centric CSR" (Boundless 2016).

An eco-centric values system needs to crafted in organizations and eventually become an integral aspect of their operating cultures. It is equally critical that board governance be applied in a way which stresses an eco-centric values-based leadership approach which promotes the idea that all business actions should include environmentally friendly activities and promote sustainability (Laplume et al. 2008). In this regard it is also important to create an atmosphere in which both internal and external practices include CSR and stakeholder engagement policies and strategies. The role played by managers and leaders in organizations is also important in driving the notion of CSR and in stressing its value to society as such, under the umbrella of corporate citizenship (Crane and Matten 2010). Both the vision and mission of the organization must reflect facets of CSR management and make it patently clear that it is a critical organizational task. It thus becomes important to develop a mission and robust strategic vision which revolves around ethics and the practice of corporate social responsibility. Industries should be carefully developing strategies to support factors eco-innovation, and simultaneously highlight related issues of regulation, innovation, and technological change. Essentially, future development of industries could be molded by the a strict policy-driven exemplar of sustainability and resource efficiency (Lopez and Montalvo 2015).

The expectations of various stakeholder groups need to be considered by the organization (ISO 2010). In a nutshell, it makes good sense to engage in practices that demonstrate that the organizational values include the desire to meet stakeholder needs and wants. This will aid in recruiting of values driven employees and help the organization to retain customers while it develops a desirable strong customer base (Peppers and Rogers 2004). Innovation and creativeness are sources which support sustainability when they are undertaken with a strong ethical conviction (Weinstein 2012; Barnes 2013). While innovation is important, the organization should steer clear of the temptation to take short-cuts that may have the direct or indirect consequence of leading to ethical compromises which will taint the organization's reputation, credibility, standing in society and most importantly, an irreversible loss of stakeholder trust. Managers and leaders should thus demonstrate their ethical mettle by doing the right thing all the time and by dealing effectively with ethical dilemmas (Sims 2013). This stance should be resolutely maintained even in the face of possibly diminished profits.

CONCLUSION

Organizations should consider designing and manufacturing eco-effective products and services and for example, exploit energy from renewable resources such as solar and bio-gas. The conservation of all species should be a priority. They could also request financial investments from administrations that back eco-effective industries and demonstrate their care for the environment in what they do, not in what they say they do. Customers and in fact new employees are always attracted to an organization which demonstrates genuine concern for the environment and society in general and which contributes to the local community in a "win win" scenario. Eco-centric CSR actions should be integrated within all business operations. For example, a business could incorporate life-cycle assessment, a technique which is "aimed at assessing the environmental impacts associated with all the stages of a product's life, from raw material extraction through materials processing, manufacture, distribution, use, repair and maintenance, and disposal or recycling. Business conduct needs to be conceptualized to reveal eco-centrism and ecological sustainability since the current bottom-line trajectory of most operations is not sustainable. The methodology used here to inform businesses is grounded on a literature-based exploratory overview research methodology. The study will hopefully inform ethical practice in relevant organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizations should address the eco-concerns of stakeholders and the challenges posed by operating practices and resolve how to best respond to these. Effective communication will serve the purpose of clarifying how a business operates and why it does what it does. The leaders and managers as key decision-makers must be intellectually engaged in an all-inclusive approach to ascertain innovative ways to better assign organizational resources to achieve eco-centric outcomes which will positively impact on society and lead to organizational sustainability. An eco-centric approach must be strategic in orientation and integrated into operations while being fairly prescriptive, comprehensive and systematic, in how it deals with stakeholders. There is no doubt that organizations can play a huge role in enabling a more curative economy which is eco-centric. A commitment to sustainable environmental stewardship is critical as are enabling conditions for an eco-centric economy in which the policies of the governments of the world play a vital role in encouraging innovation and guiding sustainable development. Regulations and policies should be informed by planetary needs. An enabling infrastructure is vital if especially poor communities are to be empowered and uplifted and to this end CSR and ethical business practices are critical. Governments and society should make it impossible for organizations which degrade the environment and destroy global biodiversity to operate. Efficient energy management systems must be sought and efforts to reduce water, energy and material consumption pursued with vigor. An eco-centric approach will enhance business profitability and sustainability.

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