

Business Organisations Awareness of Sustainable Development in Ondo State: Implications for Business and Industry Education

Adekunle Olatumile Ph.D

*Adekunle Ajasin University,
Akungba Akoko Nigeria.
E-mail: kunletumile@yahoo.com*

Doi:10.5901/jesr.2012.v2n3p247

Abstract *This paper investigates the activities of business organizations as they affect the biophysical environment. Given the fact that most business organizations seem not attuned to the tenets of sustainable development as they are guided by the growth model of development that ravages the environment. One hundred workers from three companies were administered with a questionnaire to ascertain their knowledge about sustainable development, findings show significant relationship between business ownership and awareness of sustainable development, there is also significant relationship between educational qualifications of business owners and awareness of sustainable development. The paper suggests a model for business and industry Education.*

Key Words: *Sustainable Development, Business and Industry Education, Environment, Business Organization, Natural Resources.*

1. Introduction

One of the main issues that dominate developmental discourse in the 21st century is the issue of sustainable development, sustainable development is 'development that meets the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. (WCED 1987: 43). The essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitation imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs (WCED, 1987:43).

A core principle of sustainable development is to improve human well-being and to sustain those improvements over time, through passing the means of survival on to future generations unimpaired and building, or at least not diminishing, the total stock capital. It also requires the integration of social, economic, environmental and governance goals in decision making (WCED, 1987:43).

Sustainable development is comprised of the following distinct elements: Integration of economic, environmental and social considerations into all decision making. Fostering of intra-generational equity through the alleviation of poverty by concentrating the benefits of development in lesser developed areas. Consideration of the needs of future generations so as to ensure that intra-generation equity exists. (International Institute for Environment and Development, and World Business Council for sustainable Development 2002).

Sustainability therefore entails conducting ourselves in a manner in which current efforts to improve lives and conditions (i.e. "development") can be continued (for 'sustained') indefinitely. Consequently, if a company is to operate in a manner that fosters sustainability, it needs to ensure that it does not undermine the continuing capacity of the natural environment to provide services, and that it does not contribute to any instability in the communities and economies in which it operates. Achieving this requires that innovative ways of changing institutional structures and influencing individual behaviour must with taking actions and changing practices at all levels from individuals to the international (The Prince of Wales, 2005).

Components of sustainable development or the 'triple bottom line' which in its broadest sense captures the spectrum of economic, environmental and social values that business organizations should seek to be measured against if they are to promote sustainability, has gained widespread recognition as a framework for measuring business performance (The Prince of Wales, 2005). These are:

- The economic bottom line (profit) includes financial and manufactured capital.
- The social bottom line (people) includes human and social capital.
- The environmental bottom line (planet) includes natural capital (The Prince of Wales, 2005)

2. Statement of problem

The accustomed growth based model of development, that guides the operation of business concerns has been fruitful for a few but detrimental to many. It is a part to prosperity that ravages the environment and leaves a majority behind in squalor. The deterioration of our natural habitat is not far from the misuse of natural resources by mankind through the activities of business organizations. Observations across many local governments in the state show that many of the business enterprises have little or no knowledge about sustainable development. This study is set to assess the level of their awareness of sustainable development.

3. Methodology

Three companies; a fast food company, a road construction company and an oil prospecting company were selected. One hundred members of staff were selected through accidental random sampling techniques. They were given a questionnaire that was meant to ascertain their knowledge about sustainable development.

Hypothesis 1

There will be no significant relationship between ownership of business and awareness of sustainable development.

Table 1: Zero order correlation showing the relationship between ownership of business and awareness of sustainable developments.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Pearson correlation
Ownership	100	1.84	0.838	0.436
Awareness of sustainable development	100	28.76	15.380	

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 alpha level at 0.01 significance level. Table 1 above shows that there is significant relationship between ownership of business and awareness of sustainable development.

According to Peters and Porters (1990), sustainable development makes good business sense because it can create competitive advantages and new opportunities. This view of Peters and Porters is sharply in agreement with the above result because sustainable development brings about competitive advantages and new opportunities into business hence the owner must be aware of the new development.

Schmidheiny (1992) opined that sustainable development also requires far-reaching shifts in corporate attitudes and new ways of doing business.

According to Ulhoi (1992) if growing environmental concern is to be treated more as an opportunity than a threat, then a whole new strategies approach become crucial. The implications are far-reaching and include a redefinition of the corporate value system, a realignment of the corporate value system, and a change in behaviour throughout the entire organization. These assertions underscore the result of the hypothesis 1 above.

Hypothesis 2.

There will be no significant relationship between educational qualification of business owners and awareness of sustainable development.

Table 2: Zero order correlation showing the relationship between educational qualification of business owners and awareness of sustainable development.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Pearson correlation
Educational qualifications of owner				-0.532
Awareness of sustainable development	100	28.76	15.38	

From the above table, it can be seen that the result is significance at 0.01 level. This implies that the stated hypothesis is rejected. That is, there is a significant relationship between educational qualification of business owners and awareness of sustainable development. This implies that the owner must be educative enough before he can understand in detail all about sustainable development and how to practice it in his economic operations.

According to Cortes (1993), during the 1990's an increasing number of University presidents signed the Tail Loire Declaration, which among other things call for the creation of programmes to enable faculties to introduce environmental

perspectives and values into all courses in order to produce future graduates, who are environmentally literate and competent.

As pointed out by Cortes (1993), there is still a need for a variety of highly educated and trained professionals.

According to UNEP (1990), industry has five major environmental education needs:

- i. Greater all round environmental awareness
- ii. Environmental education for present and future managers;
- iii. Training programmes for environmental specialists;
- iv. Environmental education for engineers and other professionals and
- v. Worker education and training.

This assertion is in agreement with the result of hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3

There will be no significant relationship between gender of respondents and their perception of sustainable development.

Table 3: Zero order correlation showing the relationship between gender and respondents perception of sustainable development.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Pearson correlation
Sex	100	1.48	0.502	
				-0.168
Awareness of sustainable development	100	28.76	15.380	

From the above table, the formulated hypothesis is accepted. That is, there is no significant relationship between respondent's gender and their perception of sustainable development. This implies that, it is both female and male that make up any society and both of them are at the high peak of knowing and understanding what sustainable development is all about, because it is both gender that are making use of the environment.

According to Brundtland Report (1987), sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. In other words, sustainable development focuses on improving the quality of life for all of the earth's citizens without stressing these natural resources beyond the capacity of the environment to supply them indefinitely. Hence, all citizens both male and female are concerned about sustainable development.

4. Conclusion

The level of an awareness of sustainable development is still low among the business organizations and this has led to environment degradation, lives of workers is at stake and also, they do not enhance sustainability as a result of lack of knowledge of sustainable development.

The roles of the owners or the company to the environment such as giving contract to local contractor has been neglected and also the rights of their workers such as leisure time, good health and sound education or training have been deprived.

It is now left for us to employ all possible means as individuals, as group or as policy makers, to stop these harmful practices. This will be of help to owners, workers and the society at large.

4.1 Implications for Industry Education

The study adapt the recommendations of Tilbury, Adams and Keogh (2005) on steps for strengthening Environmental Education for sustainability within business and industry sector for the proposed industry education model;

Government policy should:

Recognise that Environmental Education initiatives focused on compliance, environmental performance and product stewardship need to be more closely aligned with learning for sustainability;

Encourage tools and resources that enhance motivation and capacity for long-term change;

Tap the potent power of informal learning;

Mobilise corporate organisations that seek to educate stakeholders on sustainability, for action.

Industries should:

Encourage incentives for corporate organisations to evaluate and learn from their education and training experiences. This would help them assess the impact of their current programmes and help them improve their management and performance concerning sustainability;

Enlist professional learning for sustainability educators to mentor business owners and managers from corporate organisations responsible for developing corporate stakeholder education programmes;

Provide support, in the form of training or other resources to facilitators of informal networks so that they are able to maximize the learning opportunities for participants;

Identify and categorise existing opportunities for informal learning for sustainability and available sustainability resources and tools.

Progressive stages in corporate sustainability should be mainstreamed in the model. This according to Tilbury, Adams and Keogh (2005) are:

1 Compliance - environmental considerations only of concern if obliged by law

2 Performance - improved environmental management leads to greater resource efficiency and reduced costs.

3 Stewardship – extended producer responsibility for product impacts; sustainability perceived in terms of benefit to long-term stakeholder prospects and continued license to operate

4 Social responsibility – management seeks to establish culture that is committed to meeting stakeholders interest and the needs (not just shareholders); profit is the goal, but not at any cost.

5 Learning organization – stakeholders in the business develop capacity to reflect on their roles in achieving sustainability and are actively involved in decision making and change for sustainability

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

Our policy makers should ensure proper monitoring of the business organization.

Government should ensure implementation of policies.

Widespread awareness of the perils of environmental degradation must be encouraged.

Widespread awareness on sustainable development through education at all level must be encouraged.

Government should use mass-media as a means of communication to the large community on sustainable development.

There is need for business leaders to come together and grapple with these complex problems in the company of representatives from government and civil society and with facilitation from expert practitioners in the fields.

In order to ensure that this support be effective, it is important, however, that efforts be well targeted and hence, that a too scattered approach be avoided.

There should be programmes or policies to foster. Small-to-medium enterprises. The policies should define:

- Capacity for ensuring sustainability at the community level
- Effective dispute resolution processes for community level.
- Social safeguard policies for vulnerable groups.
- Frameworks for local economic development.

References

- BEP (2003), Business and the Environmental Programme: Background briefing the Reference compendium on Business and sustainability, UK, University of Cambridge.
- Environmental Resources Management, International institute for Environment and Development (2002). Finding the way forward: How could voluntary Action move mining Towards sustainable Development, London.
- European Foundation (1999), Report on the Role of the social partners in sustainable Development.
- Falodun A.B et al (1997), Round-up Economic, Lagos, Longman Nigeria Plc.
- International Institute for Environment and Development (2003). The millennium Development Goals and Local Process" Hitting the target or missing the point? London IIED.
- International Institute for Environment and Development and World Business Council for sustainable Development (2003), finding common Ground: Indigenous peoples and their Association with the mining sectors, London, IIED, WBCSD.
- John. P. Ulhol et al (1996), corporate Environmental and Resources Management and Educational Requirements (part 1), Ireland, European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions.

- Scoullous M.J et al (1999), Report on Public Participation Environmental information and Awareness in the Mediterranean.
- Scoullous M.J et al (2004). Handbook on methods used in Environmental Education and Education for sustainable Development, Athens.
- The Energy sector Management Assistance Programme, World Bank and International Council on mining and metals (2005). Community Development Toolkit: Pioneering New approaches in support of sustainable Development in the Extractive Sector, UK and USA ESMAP and the world Bank and ICMM.
- Tilbury, D., Adams, K. and Keogh, A. (2005) A National Review of Environmental Education and its Contribution to Sustainability in Australia: Business and Industry Education- Key Findings. Canberra: Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage and Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES)
- United Nation Educational, Scientific and cultural organization and the Government of Greece (1998). Environment and society: Education and public Awareness for sustainability, proceeding of the Thessaloniki Conference, Athens, UNESCO and the government Greece.
- World Bank (nd), making sustainable commitments. An Environmental Strategy for the World Bank, Washington, D.C.

