

Institute Social Responsibility by Going Green- A Study at KLS Institute of Management Education and Research, Belagavi, India

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Abstract

Rapid industrialization over the last few decades has resulted in exploitation of the environment leading to an adverse impact on the climate which, if left unattended, can lead to unprecedented natural disasters for the future generations. There is an urgent need for countries across the globe to focus on sustainable development to protect their natural resources for current and future generations. The approach to such a development cannot be a knee jerk reaction. It has to be a proactive, well-planned and coordinated effort from all the stake holders of a country. The education sector is an important stake holder in any country and management education is a vital component of this sector. Business schools through their institute social responsibility (ISR) initiatives can play a key role in the sustainable development. This paper discusses sustainable development and corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the role of education sector in India, in general and business schools in particular, in sustainable development through going green. The paper further discusses the initiatives undertaken by KLS Institute of Management Education and Research, a standalone business school with a student strength of 240 in Belagavi, a small tier-II city in the southern state of Karnataka in India towards sustainable development and ISR in its journey towards becoming a green campus. The paper suggests ways to further improve the ISR efforts of the institute to gain competitive advantage.

Keywords: Sustainable Development; Institute Social Responsibility; Green Campus; Education Sector; Competitive Advantage

INTRODUCTION

The COP 21 Paris Climate Conference that opened in the first week of December, 2015 is perhaps the first global event in recent times that has made people from all walks of life around the globe to sit up and take notice. Currently we are facing the most severe environmental crisis in modern history as a consequence of unsustainable development due to mismanagement of our natural and social resources. In the last five decades or so, economies around the world including India had adopted rapid industrialization as a means to grow and improve the quality of life for their citizens. However this relentlessly pursuit of growth by mankind through

industrialization and unprecedented production and consumption has resulted in adverse impact on the climate. Human beings are destroying nature and damaging the environment. 'Man has become the worst enemy of man'. It is therefore for human beings around the world to take up their responsibilities and influence their governments and corporate businesses for the good of future generations.

Business corporations operate in a pluralistic society. There is a high level of interaction and interdependence between the business and the society. As business organizations draw their resources from the society and as their actions have a considerable impact on the environment there has always been a feeling amongst them that they should be more responsible towards society and the environment. However the time has now come where corporates need to be proactive and have a strategic approach towards their social responsibilities to ensure their contributions towards reducing global warming and at the same time have a competitive edge. The education sector is a major stakeholder in shaping economy and culture of any country and the role of business schools is paramount in grooming future leaders and managers who will be leading the corporates under various capacities to be more sensitive to sustainable development of the country. The business schools through their Institute Social Responsibility (ISR) initiatives can play a significant part in internalizing values and commitment to the society amongst their students through experiential learning to become transformative agents within the society and lead by example through sustainable practices towards nation building.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Economies around the globe have been dumping sewage, production wastes and trash into air, rivers, streams and open land since industrial revolution. They have indulged in massive deforestation, released Man-made gases like hydro-fluro carbon; nitrous oxide; carbon dioxide and methane leading to environment pollution, acid rain, depletion of the ozone layer and global warming. There has been a significant impact on biodiversity, forestry, agriculture, availability of water resources, dry land and human health. Countries have realized that if significant efforts are not made immediately to arrest this phenomenon it will lead to ecological, social and economic disasters in their countries. India too has been impacted badly, it is the world's sixth largest and second fastest growing country in terms of producing greenhouse gases. Metro cities Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai are three of the world's ten most polluted cities. The disastrous impact of floods as witnessed recently in the southern state of Kerala and Chennai, water scarcity in Shimla and droughts in a large number of districts and

excessive heat has compelled people to think seriously to do something to address the problem of global warming.

The world has now become much concerned about the environmental issues in the global economy. There is an urgent need to build a sustainable society that incorporates values, systems and activities that are environmentally sound, socially just and economically viable. The Brundtland Commission in 1987 defined Sustainable Development as ‘The ability to ensure that humanity meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (Daniel et al., 1987). According to the Triple Bottom-line approach (Savitz& Weber, 2006) sustainability is a balance between protecting the planet, taking care of the people and profitability, i.e. planet, people and profits. Environmental sustainability can be defined as ‘a condition of balance, resilience, and interconnectedness that allows human society to satisfy its needs while neither exceeding the capacity of its supporting ecosystems to continue to regenerate the services necessary to meet those needs nor by our actions diminishing biological diversity’ (Morelli, 2011).

Environment sustainability is less about complying with existing and future regulations and more about proactively creating innovative business models integrating people, planet and profits to gain competitive advantage. Sustainability cannot be a one-off activity of a given organization or a result of sustainable practices of a few organizations. It has to be a sustained effort of all organizations in a given economy integrating all the economies of the world. In India Article 15A of the constitution has made it a fundamental duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including lakes, rivers and wildlife.

The rapid growth in internet technology and social networking has led to the enhancement of awareness and knowledge about the environment within the communities all over the world resulting in grass-roots environmental action that are without precedent. Communities across the world are now more conscious and concerned about their local environmental problems than ever before. Business corporations, the main engines of economic growth, face real pressures to respond to the environmental concerns. Customers are demanding safer and cleaner production facilities, products and services that leave a lower carbon footprint and waste-recycling programs. Employees are demanding safer and healthier work conditions. Governments all over the world are legislating thousands of environmental protection measures each year and above all the media is giving a strong voice to these demands prompting corporate action.

To face the environmental challenge corporations need to have a complete changeover to models that can result in environment sustainability. Times now demand the need to use natural resources in a sustainable way; i.e. meeting the needs in such a way that it not only meets the needs of present generation but also of the future. Historically corporations have thrived on the emergence of consumer societies. They have encouraged uncontrolled consumption through systematic promotion and advertising campaigns. This has resulted in breeding a highly consumerist, even anti-conservationist culture in people. Sustainable development requires more controlled and thoughtful patterns of consumption by the consumers. It calls for environmentally functional products and packaging. It requires cleaner and smaller scale production systems. It also calls for a radical rethinking in corporate promotion and advertising approaches.

However corporations are operating in fiercely competitive environments and face enormous pressures to cut costs. This limits their ability to spend on safety, environmental protection, health and maintenance. Managers have high job mobility, short job tenures and their performance evaluation and compensation is short term oriented. Therefore they have little motivation to consider the long term environmental issues when they are making their decisions. Yet corporations are the key engines of economic development and they are the vehicles on which sustainable development must ride. Sustainable development will succeed or fail depending on the ability to create sustainable corporations and Governments, consumers, communities and the media also have vital roles in achieving sustainable development. Business corporations have to be responsible to the natural environment in order to survive, sustain, grow and prosper in the intensely competitive global and knowledgeable markets. The looming environmental crisis offers great opportunities for companies, and visionary leaders can change their business models by leveraging sustainable development through efficient and effective use of energy and resources, development of Eco-innovations and human empowerment to gain competitive advantage.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a means adopted by many business corporations to sustainable development. CSR is the ability of the corporation to relate its operations and policies to the social environment in ways that are mutually beneficial to the company and the society (Koontz, 2004). The core objective of CSR is to optimize the overall impact of an organization on all its stakeholders and the society while considering the environment and

sustainability. The basic studies undertaken over the years have indicated a positive correlation between corporate reputation and their social responsibility initiatives (Hamilton, 1995). There are also studies showing positive correlation between environmental performance and financial performance of a company (Hart, 1999). CSR actions have economic value added implications on brand equity, company reputation, access to finance, employee motivation, innovation, intellectual capital and better risk management (Hopkins, 2004). This has resulted in companies adopting more systematic, progressive and visible CSR policies (Fombrun, 2005).

Some further studies in this area have revealed that even shareholders are increasingly supporting CSR initiatives even when such initiatives are not in their short term financial interest. They are advocating a code of conduct for managers in which, the pursuit of profits do not come at the expense of the environment, human rights, public health and safety, the dignity of employees or the welfare of the communities (Levin & Hinkley, 2004). Companies tend to adopt different approaches to CSR, the ones adopting an accommodative approach not only follow all the legal norms but will also go beyond in meeting their social responsibilities on a case to case basis when convinced of their merit. On the other hand companies adopting a proactive approach seek every opportunity available to them to contribute to the good of the society (Griffin, 2005).

In India the principles of CSR have been practiced informally since ancient times. Kautilya the great ancient Indian philosopher preached the importance of doing business ethically and helping the poor and the disadvantaged. Many industrialists of the pre-independent India practiced CSR through charity and philanthropy by establishing temples, hospitals, schools, higher education institutes and other infrastructure for public use. It is in the recent past that many of the corporate houses in India formally started practicing CSR voluntarily. However as the number has not been very encouraging the Government of India enacted Companies Act 2013 effective from 1st April, 2014. As per section 135 of the act all the companies having net worth of USD 71.6 million or above or an annual turnover of USD 143.2 million or more or a net profit of USD 0.72 million or more in a financial year have to spend at least 2% of the average net profits of the last three years for the company's CSR policy. In case the said amount is not spent, the reasons for not doing so are to be disclosed in the Board's Report. CSR is a major contributor to sustainable development through the balance of a company's economic, environmental and social objectives while addressing stakeholder expectations and increasing shareholder value. Many companies approach sustainability through their CSR policy. As per

schedule VII of the act one of the activity that can be undertaken by the company as a part of their CSR is ensuring environmental sustainability and ecological balance.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As it is critical to adopt a holistic approach to sustainable development in these challenging times, nations need to internalize sustainable development in their citizens and education is the best tool to do so. Realizing the need for integrating the principles, values and practices for sustainable development with education, the United Nations launched the ‘Decade of education for Sustainable Development’ in 2005. Many schools responded positively and started adopting greening of school campuses. In schools practicing sustainable development stakeholders felt that there are benefits to going green and would likely support greening efforts. However they perceived that limited resources of money, time, information, and personnel presented substantial barriers to leading and managing green school campuses (Veronese & Kensler, 2013).

Education in India is dominated by both the government and the private sector and can be broadly classified into primary education which offers education from nursery to the twelfth grade and the higher education offering education in medical, engineering, management, law etc. The National Policy on Education-1986 reiterated the growing need to address the environmental concerns in India. Primary education can play a crucial role in building a strong foundation of environmental ethics amongst the children as skills, values and attitudes are inculcated from early years in an individual’s life. Further the supreme court of India in its judgment in December, 2003 directed that environmental education should be an integral and compulsory part of school curriculum from Standard I to Standard XII. The Indian government felt the need to formalize education in sustainable development and include appropriate processes in the school curricula. Education for sustainable development is now a core of the curriculum of each subject area developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (Sharma & Pandya, 2015). The execution of the curriculum ensures that children are sensitized to sustainable development through experiential learning.

If primary education plays a crucial role in building a strong foundation of environmental ethics in children, higher education plays a crucial role in shaping people as future leaders and decision makers. Institutions of higher learning like colleges and universities are always in the forefront of any transition. They have an enormous impact on a country’s workforce, economy and environment and are well positioned to provide leadership in planning and implementing

sustainability. They can play a key role in innovation and environmental education and provide a great opportunity for a generational behavior change towards sustainable development (Jackson, 2011). Universities can contribute to sustainable development by practicing sustainability in their own operations as well as formally educate their students to inculcate sustainability in their personal and professional lives and prepare a workforce for new reoriented or emerging jobs in a sustainable economy.

A sustainable university can be defined as ‘an institution of higher learning that addresses, involves and promotes, on a regional or a global level, the minimization of negative environmental, economic, societal and health effects generated in the use of its resources in order to fulfill its function of teaching, research, outreach and partnership in ways to help society to make the transition to sustainable lifestyles, (Hordijk, 2014). There is a positive perception about sustainable universities in the minds of the stake holders. Studies have also shown that higher the integration, inclusion and diffusion of the sustainability theme in the institutional, managerial, research and teaching activities of universities, higher is their rankings (Salvioni, et al., 2017).

As discussed business corporates are major players in sustainable development through their CSR efforts, so amongst higher education institutes the role of management institutes in particular needs specific emphasis. These institutes are a major source of human resource for leadership and critical decision making roles for organizations. As more and more business organizations are adopting sustainable development as a strategic tool to gain competitive advantage they are exploring management institutes that can provide management talent that is sensitized to CSR and can plan and execute CSR strategies at various organizational levels.

Management institutes are facing stiff competition due to the mushrooming of management schools in almost all countries across the globe. In order to remain relevant, survive and grow they need to keep pace with the changing needs of the industry. To become the preferred source of talent for corporate in the current times, they need to groom talent that are sensitive to and possess the relevant skills to plan and execute strategies of sustainable development and CSR for organizations. To achieve this they need to practice institute social responsibility (ISR) to provide an ecosystem on their campus for experiential learning. The institutes need to establish and maintain an ethical approach towards all the stakeholders, strengthen societal citizenship and commitment to society and provide services to local community. They need to develop a culture that encourages environmental commitment and sustainable development at

both local and global level amongst students. ISR can be defined as ‘The continuing commitment of the institute with a vision to manage ethically and behave responsibly towards all its stakeholders and the society and to promote a culture that will transform students into business leaders with a mindset for sustainable development’.

After liberalization in the 1990s India witnessed a phenomenal growth in management education. There was a mushrooming of management institutes in Tier – II and in some cases even in Tier- III cities in almost all the states till the late 2000s. A significant number of these institutes have not been able to sustain over the years and are on the verge of closedown as per recent reports. However Indian corporates urgently need highly qualified and talented management professionals with a mindset for sustainable development to help them compete in the hyper competitive global environment and management institutes need to gear up to meet this emerging need.

INSTITUTE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AT KLS INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (KLS’ IMER)

Founded by eminent lawyers Karnataka Law Society established KLS Institute of Management Education and Research (KLS IMER) in the small Tier – II city of Belagavi in Karnataka state, India, in the year 1991. It is a premiere management institute offering a two years full time degree in Masters of Business Administration affiliated to Rani Channamma University, Belagavi. It is recognized by AICTE, Ministry of Human Resource and Development, New Delhi. It has been accredited by NAAC with grade ‘A’, recognized by UGC under 2(f) and 12(B) and by Rani Channamma University as a Research Center. The Institute has been bestowed with A++ by Business India and Dalal Street Finance E-Journal consecutively for 3 Years and also recognized among top institutes of India by Competition Success Review. IMER has always adapted to the rapidly changing business environment and remained the pioneer institute in the field of management education, research and consultancy and is the preferred destination for recruitment of management graduates in this part of the country. As an institute of higher learning IMER is aware that the seeds of change sown on its campus will grow and disperse afar. This provides an opportunity to lead in inculcating environmental culture and train the students to develop new paradigms for solving problems that are local, national and global in nature. Hence the institute has strived to lead by example and evolved an effective approach to ISR by going green to respond to the corporate need for management students with a mindset for sustainable development.

Going green of an institute means to pursue knowledge and practices on its campus that can lead to more environmentally friendly and ecologically responsible decisions and lifestyles, which can help protect the environment and sustain its natural resources not only for the current generation but also for the future. It focuses on three key activities; Recycle, reduce and reuse. A green campus is a place where environmentally responsible education and practice go hand in hand. Here operational functions, business practices, academic programs and most important the people are interlinked towards sustainability (Nath, et al, 2013). Recently Indian Institute of Technology -Dharwad, the latest entrant to the IITs, the prestigious and premium technology institutes in India, has set itself a challenge to build an eco-friendly and green campus in a forested area that will have minimum impact on the surroundings. They hope to achieve a near-net zero waste status, water reuse and alternative sources of energy like solar, wind and hybrid (Kumar,2018).

Green Campus Initiatives at KLS' IMER

KLS' IMER has initiated a number of green campus practices as a part of its ISR over the years with the unstinted support from its management and active participation of its students and staff. They include small initiatives with minimal expenses to big ticket investments. The focus is on reduce, reuse and recycle.

Centre for Ethics and Social Responsibility: The institute established the centre on its campus on 3rd December, 2009. The purpose was to supplement management education through value based inputs and inculcate social responsiveness amongst students and other stakeholders and to provide a platform to industries, institutes and government agencies to promote ethics and social responsibility. All the activities of the centre are driven by the students and guided by the faculty coordinator. Some notable activities initiated by the centre are, organizing international conferences on Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility, sponsoring students to attend CSR workshops conducted by industries and publishing research papers on Ethics, Values and CSR in international and national conferences. It also promotes social outreach activities like cleanliness drives, vidhyaadhaar projects, rural health, rural and tribal literacy and community development. Blood donation camps are conducted annually in association with the Indian Red Cross Society, where all eligible students donate blood along with staff and other members of the local community.

Greening of the energy supply: Fossil fuels, the major source of energy at present, continue to pollute our air and water and are fast depleting. The demand for energy will continue to rise

putting enormous pressure on the existing resources. KLS' IMER has undertaken major initiatives to transition towards sustainable energy sources that are environment friendly and renewable. To meet its increasing energy requirements the institute explored the use of solar energy that is a renewable resource and does not emit any greenhouse gases in its generation process unlike power generated by the grid of the company supplying power. The institute has installed a 70 kWp Grid Tie Solar PV roof top power generating system on its terrace at an investment of USD 59,765 (1USD = 69.84 Rupees) in the month of April, 2017 and is integrated into the power grid on campus. In its first year of operation it has not only helped IMER in reducing its carbon footprint but also its energy bills to a large extent. The financial savings during the year is depicted in Table 1. At the current rate the investment in the project is expected to be recovered in 7 years. A student campus intern is involved in monitoring the project.

Table 1: Financial Report of the 70kWp SRTPV from May 2017 to April 2018

Months	Solar power generated in (Units)	Powerbill before Installation (USD)	Power bill after installation (USD)	Savings (USD)
May	9,390	1162.30	627.61	534.69
June	5,891	1230.07	362.84	867.23
July	6,138	818.71	641.37	177.35
August	6,592	790.81	519.76	271.05
September	7,473	1054.27	237.96	816.31
October	8,877	960.09	235.31	724.79
November	9,055	1007.30	280.86	726.45
December	9,819	1134.88	285.14	849.74
January	9,618	1036.83	195.09	841.74
February	9,240	1021.12	172.02	849.10

March	9,628	1198.65	134.44	1064.22
April	8,249	1198.65	380.71	817.94
Total	99,970	12613.69	4073.10	8540.59

Source: KLS' IMER records

Standalone street lights powered by solar energy have been installed on campus. To reduce energy consumption seventy percent of the tube lights have been replaced by low energy consuming LED lamps in a phased manner as on date. In order to harness alternative sources of energy, the institute has installed a portable FRP biogas plant in February, 2015 with an investment of USD 415 to optimize the utilization of food and vegetable waste generated on campus every day and convert it into energy that is used to meet the partial energy requirements of cooking in the canteen. Students have been involved in projects to reduce energy wastage as a part of their 5s projects. Off campus students are encouraged to travel by the college bus to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels.

Rain water harvesting and reduction in usage of water: With the ever growing population it is predicted that water will be the major cause of conflicts in the future globally. Any effort towards environmental sustainability will be incomplete without water conservation being a part of it. Rainwater harvesting is an effective technique of water conservation by collecting, storing and using rainwater and also for recharge of groundwater. KLS'IMER installed the rooftop rainwater harvesting system in June, 2016 at an investment of USD 7860. The rainwater collected on the rooftop of the main building is directed to a storage tank and then to a well through gravity. The KLS' IMER main building has a roof area of 1468.4 Sq. mtr. The average annual rainfall of Belagavi city in which the institute is located is 1064 mm. considering a runoff coefficient of 0.9 the average annual water harvested is 14,06,140 Litres (1468.4 X 0.9 X 1064). The harvested water collected in the well during monsoons is used later for irrigating the landscape garden and campus maintenance. This has helped reduce the usage of metered water from Belagavi Municipal Corporation. The institute has reduced the water wastage by creating awareness about the same amongst the students and staff.

Move towards a paperless campus: Mindless degradation of forests has resulted in adverse climate changes. To save trees the institute has initiated a number of measures to reduce paper usage to the bare minimum. Campus management software, Contenio, was installed in 2011 and since then all internal communications are in digital form and so are communications and

other operational requirements with management, university, parents and students including their assignments and internal tests except in cases where physical documentation is mandatory. The institute is moving towards green marketing in its promotions with the adoption of digital advertising and distribution of all promotional material in soft form. Most of the financial transactions of the institute are now digital. All waste paper generated is donated to a NGO, that is further recycled and the revenue generated is used for funding education of the needy. To contribute to increase in the green cover of the city, every year the students and staff are actively involved in tree plantation programs in association with industries and NGOs like Green Savors.

Recycling and disposal of waste: Waste disposal especially, chemical and electronic, has become a major concern on our finite planet. Organic waste like leaves from trees and plants, waste food and cut vegetables, slurry from the biogas plant etc. dumped were creating unhygienic conditions on campus. KLS' IMER installed a vermicomposting unit on campus with an investment of USD 573 to convert such waste to exceptional quality organic manure which is now being used as a fertilizer for the campus garden in place of chemical fertilizers used earlier. The rapid change in electronic hardware technology generates huge amount of e-waste on a regular basis, which if not disposed properly will lead to environmental degradation. Disposal of e-waste is a challenge both logistically and economically. To tackle this problem KLS' IMER has donated its obsolete computers over the years to primary schools for reuse. Broken down electronic parts are aggregated along with those from the sister institutions at the board level and disposed scientifically with the help of expert vendors.

A number of benefits have accrued to the institute as a result of its green campus initiatives to date, a few notable ones are; enhanced reputation in the area as a socially responsible business school that leads through example; transformation of students into business leaders sensitive to sustainable development who will also be preferred by the corporate to lead at various levels in future; contribution towards better accreditation grades; economic benefits through savings; improved quality of life on campus and above all contribution to nation building.

Going Green at KLS' IMER - the road ahead

The management of the institute has approved a proposal to establish a CSR Advisory Cell headed by a team of faculty members which will be launched on 29th September, 2018. The major objective of the cell is to guide and support the local industries that come under the purview of Section 135 of Companies Act 2013, to formulate and implement their CSR

policies. As discussed KLS' IMER has undertaken a number of green campus initiatives over the years, as a part of its ISR, however it still has a long way to go in its journey towards being a major change agent towards sustainable development. The efforts will be effective if it adopts a strategic approach towards ISR. The institute should incorporate the green campus intent in its mission statement. The role of the institute as an environment leader including the intended behavioral change should be spelt out clearly with mapping of long-term options and desired outcomes. A strategic plan for sustainable development needs to be formulated with inputs from all the stakeholders and faculty members should play a proactive role along with students.

The organization should be restructured to help implement the plan effectively and the student body should be a part of the structure. Specific tactical plans need to be drawn from the strategy and student teams be created to execute the specific tasks. Student campus internships should be explored for projects of long term duration. Certificate courses in sustainable development should be introduced to educate students more formally. The institute should establish strategic partnerships with local environmental agencies, NGOs and business communities wherever necessary to improve effectiveness. An elaborate system to evaluate ISR efforts should be established and faculty effort in this area should be a part of the performance appraisal system.

Conclusion

There is tremendous pressure on countries across continents to take serious note of the adverse impact climate change has had on the environment in recent times. Nations will be able to face up to this challenge only if there is a congruent approach from all its stakeholders towards sustainability of the environment. Business corporations whose operations have contributed significantly to this climate change and who draw resources from the society for their existence have to take ownership towards creating a sustainable environment for the future generations. It is here that education sector in general and business schools in particular will play a significant role in providing human resources for leadership roles at different levels of business corporations.

KLS' IMER though operating in a small tier – II city in India, has recognized the importance of ISR to remain relevant in the intensely competitive environment. It has been investing in green campus initiatives over the years with some pressure on its limited resources. However the efforts have not been coordinated and strategic in planning and implementation. The initiatives can be strengthened and made more effective and efficient by adopting a strategic approach towards ISR. The strategies should be aligned to the extent possible with the institute

objectives to achieve the desired outcomes. The impetus for sustainable development should begin at the top, emanate throughout the institute, involve all stakeholders and become ingrained in the campus culture. This will help KLS'IMER to build its brand equity, long term community relationships, gain competitive advantage and contribute its bit to nation building and ensure a healthy planet for the future generations.

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