INCREASING EMPLOYEES' UNDERSTANDING ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Annotation. Employees' sustainability awareness is a significant element in the implementation of sustainability in organizations. Employees are the main facilitators of sustainability in organization, thus it is crucially important that employees could develop deeper understanding the philosophy of sustainability. This would inspire employees to look for innovative and creative ideas how to adapt sustainability concept according to the demands of organizations. The pilot survey was done to define employees needs for better understanding of sustainability and its philosophical background. Raising employees understanding about sustainability and its philosophy will be discussed in the paper. Research problem – employees don't have sufficient knowledge about sustainability in organizations. Research aim – to analyse sustainability philosophy and employees' understanding about its importance in organizations. Research methods – systematic scientific literature analysis, pilot survey. The results of the survey showed that employees from private and public organizations prefer to raise their sustainability understanding through training in similar programmes. The findings of the survey demonstrated the importance of sustainability training for employees.

Keywords: employees; sustainability; organizations; sustainability philosophy; training.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability awareness is a big challenge for modern society. At the same time each organization seeks for sustainability in all fields of their activities. Therefore, it is very important to foresee what kind of knowledge will be useful for sustainability in organizations. That is why it is necessary to raise employees' understanding about sustainability and its philosophy.

For a successful organizational performance, it is not enough to trust managers' intuition or feelings of businesses, but it is important to find the strategies that would allow all employees to show their abilities to take responsibilities on sustainability. This kind of responsibility is

one of the successful management functions. The manager has to encourage and support employees, raise their understanding of the value of sustainability, notice employees' abilities, listen to their problems and help to solve them. Successful managers know about sustainability concept and are able to inspire employees for the increased responsibility for better understanding about sustainability in organizations. Therefore, employees can rely on managers, trust them and not to resist them. Sustainable thinking is the non-stop enquiries if every activity will be useful for organization in the long-term future. It is the ability to make right decisions, to understand the sustainability holistically, to interpret it by using analytical thinking and creativity. Success to reach the goal depends on leadership, strategic thinking, purposefulness and collaboration (DuBrin,2018).

Moreover, employees' personal development training for positive belief in one's abilities and learning about sustainability can ensure acquisition not only of new information and skills, but can also enable organizations to set and reach goals. The ability to collaborate, to work in group assisting each other, to communicate effectively may guarantee sustainability in organizations. During the processes of cooperation, a lot of problems arise due to communication culture. Employees, if they are sustainability skillful, ensure positive psychological atmosphere and good working environment in organizations. At the same time manager's psychological support is very important in overcoming stress, negative feelings and emotions as well as manager's encouragement, enthusiasm is crucial, too. Sustainability and compatibility are the potential of members of the group to work together through cooperation, precision, and the ability to combine their actions (DuBrin,2018). In a group it is highly significant that people would complement each other because it makes a group stronger, more valuable and united; what is more, these elements could make a big impact on the sustainability implementation in organizations. For this reason, this paper will discuss about the importance of employees' understanding about sustainability philosophy and sustainability training directions.

Theoretical background

SOME ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABILITY TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

For the time being our society is undergoing great changes, through the transformation into a new Industry 4.0 environment which aims to create new knowledge, moral values as well as the need to learn, to understand and to empower. For this reason better communication would

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increase productivity in the workplaces with the use of innovative methods and modern technologies. In order to prove the necessity and significance of gaining knowledge about sustainability, three alternatives of traditional philosophical trends are specified:

- philosophical trend, emphasizing personality's individuality, creativity and self – realization, is based on the ideas of humanism and holism philosophy and theories;

- philosophical trend, concentrating on the requirements of labour market, is based on the ideas of subjective idealism, biheviorism and pragmatism philosophy and their theories;

- philosophical trend, stressing education of constructive and strategic thinking as well as active citizenship, is based on post modernism, social constructivism, progressivism and cognitivism philosophy and their theories.

The founders of humanism theory (Maslow,1970, Rogers, 1980), influenced by the ideas of existentialism philosophy, the principles of humanistic tradition transferred into contemporary psychology and sociology. Philosophical trend of humanism seeks for and reveals the virtues of personality, physical and mental health, inner beauty and emotions, meaningful realization of one's ideas in life. Humanistic theory of human/personality development accentuates individual's search for freedom and self – actualization, the development of personal abilities and positive attitudes towards other people. From the positivistic point of view personality is seen as knowing one's own advantages and complexities, and, having mastered freedom and dignity, feels responsibility in finding true meaning in life. Philosophical trend of humanism points out that positivistic outlook prevails and, therefore, every person has positive attitudes towards her/his state of mind, emotions and actions.

Moreover, philosophical trend of idealism stresses the necessity to create the atmosphere of considerateness for all and each individual in order to enhance personality development, to build up strategies so that every person could freely employ their experiences, reveal and/or nurture their talents at their full potential. Drawing on F. Capra and G. Pauli (1995) who emphasize that sustainability is a holistic process which requires unifying dialectical bond between theory and practice this proposition means that the process of sustainability undergoes a constant change and evolution and that the formation of sustainable society depends on the communication on sustainability in all fields of life. Therefore, the process of sustainability should be linked to all members of society. When every member of society feels responsibility

and duty, in this way it will be possible to adjust to the requirements and challenges of the contemporary world in order to grow both personally and professionally. This is a continuous process which lasts in all spheres of life unceasingly.

However, having concentrated on the subjective aspect of personality growth, and focusing on the philosophical trend, which is based on humanism and idealism, we could be trapped while ignoring an objective aspect of life, that is the dimension of the labour world and its reality. Therefore, if the methodological background of employees training in organizations is based towards the development of personality and his/her talents, there could arise contradiction between those two subjective and objective aspects. Consequently, when a person starts working career, she/he could face mismatch and therefore, the lack of knowledge about the requirements of a labour market could lead to serious misunderstandings and disappointments.

In order to avoid those possible dangers and mistakes, the focus should be paid to a philosophical trend related to sustainability, the trend which originates from the philosophical theories of post modernism, pragmatism and behaviourism. Every person makes order within the chaos of her/his own experience and data while forming reality. Practical activities are explained merely in a subjective way constructing reality and justice. The ideas of pragmatism philosophy laid grounds for the formation of pragmatism trend in training for sustainability which aims to educate a proactive and procreative person.

Post modernism philosophy pays a great attention to dialogical belonging for cooperation. The ideas of post modernism stress the importance of rationality of human activities, to the usefulness of positivism and epistemology for the benefits of mankind. Philosophical trend, which focuses on cooperation for problems solving and competences development, originates from constructivism and cognitivism philosophies. Philosophical trend, orientated towards personality/human development, emphasizes the realization of human capacities which could be enhanced while training, whereas sustainability education model orientated towards productivity focuses on the importance of the regulation of person's, labour world and environment relationships. Philosophical trend, directed towards cooperation while solving different problems, aims to mitigate conflicts and contributes the aforementioned sustainability training strategies with good practice for the sustainability awareness development.

According to the representatives of social constructivism P.L. Berger and T. Luckman (1966) the perception of the world is related to the social environment and doubt in all systems

of thought. Social realities are constructed while cooperating with people of different political systems, nationalities, and religions, therefore a new constructive approach to reality and knowledge formation is created. Philosophical trend of progressivism emphasizes the interrelations between the social problem solutions and dynamic aspects, with the concern how quickly those social issues are solved. An experiential model of sustainability training is prioritized concentrating on active participation while seeking to find a solution to different social problems in a dynamic way. A great attention is paid not to the internalization of moral attitudes and to the foreseen goals, but to the constantly changing reactions towards the modules of social problems. In this manner the question is raised in order to find a necessary solution which could gratify all the members of a specific constructed situation. This trend is based on the theories of cognitive psychology and their assumptions that cognition, as the element of mental structure, organizes personal experiences of the world structurally and internally.

Cognition filters the information about person's understanding on sustainability, environment, gained experiences and the meanings which are assigned to them by a person. A similar trend is signified by A. Bandura (1998), his social cognitivism theory is formed as an alternative to the traditional postulates according to which person's activity is based on inner motivation (needs, self – realization) or outer factors (encouragement, fear). Drawing on social cognitivism person's behaviour is neither influenced by inner, nor outer factors, but is determined by dynamic interrelation of personal, environmental and behaviouristic factors. According to the theories of social cognitivism a person is independent, proactive when striving to achieve specific goals in life which are related to social, economic and personal goals. A person sets means and standards for the achievement of the goals, behaves appropriately, controls oneself, shows awareness, concentration and will. Consequently, without certain strategies and human potential little could be done and achieved, therefore, based on the analyses of philosophical theories and postulates, it could be stated that knowledge about sustainability increases employee's cognitive, affective and proactive potential. In this complicated world all philosophical theories are important and needed to be incorporated into employees' training processes. Dialogical belonging and cooperation could be the means for this construction of new knowledge about sustainability creation and adaptation in organizations.

The links between sustainability and social change are reasonably clear. Employees' training is not the solution to our environmental predicament (Huckle, 2014), but appropriate forms of training can assist the struggle to raise employees' awareness about sustainability.

EMPLOYEES' TRAINING ON SUSTAINABILITY IN ORGANIZATIONS

The idea of sustainability is usually linked to world ecological problems, environmental protection issues and the influence of society and culture of organizations (Petkeviciute, Balciunaitiene, 2019; Ivanova, Ignatjeva, 2018).

Therefore, sustainability is related to environmental, economic, institutional and social progress, which aims to empower employees to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable development in organizations. However, sustainability idea is notoriously difficult to grasp. Multidimensional, encompassing social, ecological and economic theories, policies and practice, it can be a maze of complexity and contradiction. Humanism, tolerance to diversity, respect to differences and varieties, and creating equal possibilities is in the centre of all postulates. The Official Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted on 25 September 2015 outlines the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and its 17th goal is *sustainability which aims to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development*. (The Official Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015).

1. However, the implementation of those principles is a big challenge for all organizations. It is necessary that employees need to have clear understanding of sustainability. On the other hand, a deeper understanding will help to create new ideas of sustainability and its implementation in organizations. The United Nations organization is responsible for sustainable development implementation at a global scale. Sustainable Development decade 2020 – 2030 programme (The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs.) the importance of sustainable development values which are necessary elements of sustainability according to which a sustainability skilled person should:

- understand the need for change to a sustainable way of doing things, individually and collectively;

- have sufficient knowledge and skills to decide and act in a way that favours sustainability;

- to be able to recognise and reward other people's decisions and actions that favour sustainability.

The principles of sustainable development uttered (The Earth Charter Initiative, 2006) and by the Centre for Eco Literacy, (Cultivating 20 years of Ecoliteracy, 2015) are as follows:

- the ability of strategic thinking;

- the ability to think critically, to solve problems creatively;

- a commitment to set goals and cooperate with each other;

- equity, justice and respect for all people;

- predict the consequences of actions and decisions;

- feel kinship with the natural world and invoke that feeling in others.

All employees should work together on the shared values and goals of organizations. One of the characteristics of sustainability in organizations is communication - the ability to work in a team, to respect others with different backgrounds, to inspire and motivate others to behave according to the principles of sustainability.

Sustainability practice is based on peoples' direct engagement with real-life situations through their specialities, experience and a great motivation to improve and even to change the existing working environment. The development of sustainability philosophy understanding could be effective employees' training in organizations.

It is the main point of an open-minded manager who has high quality rhetoric for persuasion about sustainability.

- The most important component behind sustainability is the development and discovery of solutions. It is our responsibility to identify problems and work on the sustainable solutions, e.g. the use of bamboo to produce paper and other products as bamboo is capable of growing and renewing itself much more quickly than trees.

- For humans, sustainability is the potential for long-term maintenance of well-being. That's why it's so important to get more knowledge about ecology or environmental management, i.e. be sustainably literate.

- For some employees sustainability knowledge is the way to preserve their mother tongue, because it's the way to save our history and culture.

- Unfortunately, millions of people share the same outlook of living: "here and right now ", that means they do not care about future and the effects of such mentality. Sustainability philosophy understanding can help change this point of view.

- Sustainability understanding is necessary to acquire skills to save the planet from destruction.

- Sustainability understanding enables us to identify problems and find solutions to the issues that may negatively affect the environment and the future generation.

- Sustainability understanding is a specific field of knowledge, ability to perform the tasks and actions.

- Sustainability understanding is very important in every human's life because it enables them to navigate in our environment, to interact with other respectfully and be useful to the society.

Sustainable development principles emphasize the equality of all three dimensions: economic, environmental and social. profit, planet and people.

According to the Figure 1 it could be a basis of sustainability development in any organization. Furthermore, based on the principle of equality it can be stated that correlation of the three dimensions is the background of harmonious living and cooperation between employees in organizations (People, Planet & Profit – Triple Bottom Line. The Ethical Measure of businesses, (2017).

Figure 1. Profit, People and Planet matrix of sustainability in organizations (People, Planet & Profit – Triple Bottom Line. The Ethical Measure of businesses, (2017).

It is highly significant to develop employees' sustainability understanding, if successful results are wanted to be achieved in organizations. Employees' training for sustainability can be described as the totality of knowledge, skills, abilities, moral values and regulations, which are essential for sustainability goals in organizations. They can be described as some level of: sustainability competence which is getting more and more valuable nowadays because employees implement the advantage not only in working environment, but also in private life. It is possible to distinguish important directions for sustainability training. It is significant to develop leadership; strategic thinking, purposefulness and collaboration for sustainability. Accepting changes and innovations; learning and getting better at what person is doing, control of knowledge and cooperation. Leadership increases employees' motivation, initiative, empathy and self-expression. According to authors D. M. Iwaniec; D.L. Childers; and A. Wiek (2014) accepting changes and innovations, reaching the goal; learning and getting better at what person is doing; working in a group; communication and control of conflicts will enable employees to facilitate sustainability awareness in organizations (Iwaniec, Childers, Wiek, 2014).

The aim of the study is to define employees' opinion about the importance of different training directions for sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

The pilot research using a questionnaire in e- versions, which was designed using Likert scale (1-5) to find out the opinion of private and public sectors employees' preferences for training about sustainability, and which was placed in various private and public organizations of Lithuania. There were 80 respondents, who represented various organizations, and answered four questions expressing their opinions about leadership, strategic thinking, purposefulness and collaboration for different training directions of sustainability.

In order to find out employees' opinion of the importance of training trends on sustainability, employees were asked to specify what kind of trends they would like to increase about understanding of sustainability. The findings were amended by using MS Excel and the descriptive analysis. Each direction for sustainability understanding was evaluated using Likert scale (1-5).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the survey about employees' training directions for sustainability

The results showed that employees of both - companies and public corporations share similar opinions because the differences between these two sections did not differ (p>0,05) and are statistically unimportant. Furthermore, the research aimed to define employees' preferences about training directions on sustainability (Figure 2). It was found out that employees who work in companies or public corporations have nearly the same preferences for sustainability training: *leadership, strategic thinking, purposefulness and collaborative*. The respondents' answers to four questions varied from 2 to 4 without signifying any of the aforementioned directions as more important. Therefore, it could be stated that it has no difference in what kind of company employees work and they choose the same trends for gaining deeper understanding on sustainability, using Likert scale (1-5).
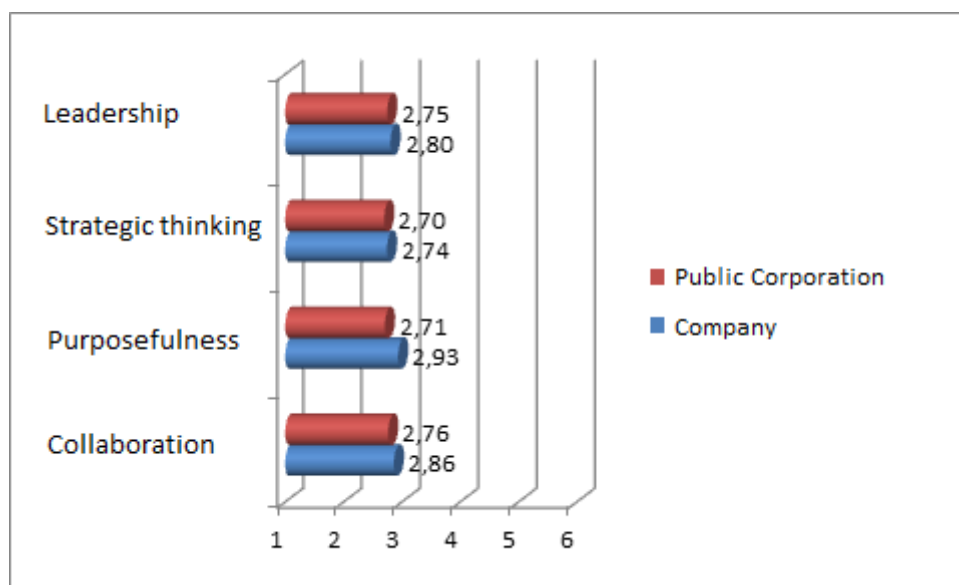
Figure 2. Employees' opinion about the training trends for sustainability.

In a scientific literature is said that sustainability in the organizations depends on the actions of employees. That is why the goal of the analysis was to define the opinion of employees about sustainability training trends in private and public companies (Figure 2).

When the analysis of the results was done, it was clear that there are no statistically important differences between findings. Therefore, we can claim that both employees of the companies and public corporations equally define the importance of training trends which are

leadership, strategic thinking, purposefulness and collaboration. These findings could be used for tailoring training programmes about sustainability for employees in organizations.

CONCLUSION

It is very important to raise employees' understanding about sustainability in modern organizations. If employees have sustainable thinking skills, they gradually increase positive psychological atmosphere and good working environment in organizations.

At the same time manager's psychological support could be grounded on sustainability philosophy which would help to overcome stress, negative feelings and emotions. Sustainability and compatibility are the potential of members of the group to work together through cooperation, precision, and the ability to combine mutual actions.

Therefore, appropriate forms of training can assist the struggle to raise employees' awareness about sustainability of organizations.. Dialogical belonging and cooperation could be the means for this construction of new knowledge about sustainability creation and adaptation in organizations.

The most important aspects for the development of sustainability philosophy understanding could be effective employees training in organizations.

One of the characteristics of sustainability in organizations is communication - the ability to work in a team, to respect others with different backgrounds, to inspire and motivate others to behave according to the principles of sustainability philosophy.

Sustainability training in organizations is based on employees' engagement with real-life situations through their activities for the improvement and development of the existing working environment. One of the most important aspects for the development of sustainability philosophy understanding could be effective employees training in organizations.

There was done a pilot survey about employees' preferences on training trends about sustainability. The results of the survey show that there are no statistically important differences between findings. Therefore, we can claim that leadership, strategic thinking, purposefulness and collaboration are the most important sustainability training trends in both private and public companies.

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