

Aspects of Sustainability and Development

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Abstract: This paper aimed at evaluating the various perspectives of sustainability in relation to development. The three pillars of sustainability namely, economic, environmental and social sustainability, were evaluated. It was noted that the first two aspects of sustainability were more common in practice and discourse than the third, social dimension. The paper reflected that social sustainability implied the well-being of the workforce and society during the various phases of development. However, the workforce had suffered neglect in the past that resulted in occupational accidents. It was concluded that employees should be given the necessary attention, just like other pillars of sustainability, to actually achieve real sustainable development.

Keywords: Pillars of Sustainability, Social, Economic, Environmental Sustainability

Introduction

An increase in population and the necessity to harness the natural resources to support it imposes a strain on the environment. The human population needs basic amenities, shelters and other development projects such as building and road construction for sustenance and comfort. However, features of development are such that raw materials are extracted from the environment and waste bi-products are produced in return to the environment. This implies that if development is not checked, the practice might become a vicious circle and hence, not sustainable.

As stated in Basiago (1999) and United Nations (2018), the increasing world's population would pose a threat to cities in terms of social conflict, environmental degradation, and the collapse of basic services. It was argued that 'urban sustainability is the antidotes to these negative urban trends due to the increase in population (Basiago, 1999). To ensure real development, this paper examined the various aspects of sustainability and aimed at identifying the best practice for sustainable development.

Aspects of Sustainability

The aspects of sustainability examined in the literature are: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and social sustainability.

Economic sustainability: According to TKI (2015), economic sustainability is an aspect that acknowledges the interactions of humans with the natural environment in using resources to create goods and services while adding values to their lives. It embodies creative development or processes that lead to sustainability of the present generation and the future. Hence, it implies a system of production that satisfies present consumption levels without compromising future needs (Basiago, 1999). The aim of this type of sustainability is actually

to achieve the sustainability of the economic system, which is easily achievable in an environment where resources are abundant or unlimited. But in reality, we live in an environment with scarce resources and a fragile system; application of creativity in the exploitation and processing of raw materials is a sine qua non for economic sustainability, that is, the sustainability of the economic system.

Environmental sustainability: Environmental sustainability is away to improve human welfare through the protection of natural environment. Environmental sustainability occurs when processes, systems and activities reduce the environmental impacts of organizations' facilities, products and operations (Frontstream, 2013). It includes the structure and function of natural ecosystems and the interactions between them and people and calls for guardianship of our environment (TKI, 2015). The guardianship could be achieved through polices and acts that support people's clamour for environmental protection. An example of such an act is the Environmental Impact Assessment Act with the main objective of ensuring that potential environmental impacts are foreseen at the appropriate stage of project design and addressed before any decision is taken on the project

Social sustainability: Social sustainability is not as common in practice and discourse as economic sustainability and environmental sustainability. The meaning and associated objectives of social dimension of sustainability remain vague (Dempsey *et al.*, 2011; Casula and Soneryd, 2012 & Kelvin 2012). In relation to projects or development, Mohamed and Charles (2016) noted that social sustainability promotes the concept of respect, awareness, diversity, vitality, and responsibility towards the workforce and the society by keeping them healthy and safe from harm during the different phases of development. However, the workforce component of this concept is usually neglected by the capitalists and organizations to the extent that employees usually sustain different degrees of occupational accidents leading to the loss of lives or victims being maimed for life. Consequently, there is a school of thought that another pillar of sustainability should be considered to address the hazards employees are exposed to if the organization processes for development is to be sustainable. This pillar of sustainability is termed 'human sustainability'

Conclusions

The various pillars of sustainability were assessed with respect to development. Initially, three perspectives of sustainability were recognised with economic sustainability and environmental sustainability being the common ones in practice and discourse. The third perspective is the social sustainability which concerns organizations' responsibility towards workforce and society by preventing them from harm during project activities. It was stated that social sustainability is the most conceptually elusive dimension in sustainable development discourse while the workforce aspect of it is in a state of neglect by organizations. It is argue that the workforces of organizations should be given the attention they deserve so that economic sustainability will be truly sustainable economically and, the objective of sustainable development can be realized.

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