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GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: POLICIES AND PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

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Recently, there has been observed an increasing awareness within business communities on the significance of going green and adopting various environment management techniques. As the corporate world is going global, the business is experiencing a shift from a conventional financial structure to a modern capacity-based economy which is ready to explore green economic facets of business. The term Green HRM has become the buzz word within the business field at present and its significance is increasing manifold with the passage of time. This term has also its secured position as a hot topic in recent research works since the awareness on environmental management and sustainable development has been increasingly raising day by day all round the globe. Today the topic Green HRM not only includes awareness towards environmental affairs, but also stands for the social as well as economical well-being of both the organization and the employees within a broader prospect. Nowadays, Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) has become a key business strategy for the significant organizations where Human Resource Departments play an active part in going green at the office. The paper largely focuses upon the various Green Human Resource Practices pursued by the organizations all over the world and, explains the simplified meaning of GHRM. The study also adds to the extant literature by discussing future direction of some GHRM functions. Finally, the paper suggests some potentially prolific HR initiatives for Green organizations.

Introduction

Twenty-first century has been showing heightened interest in the environmental concerns all around the globe irrespective of related fields be it politics, public, or business.

has arisen from specific treaties to combat climate change, e.g. Kyoto 1997, Bali 2007 and Copenhagen 2009 (Victor, 2001). Owing to the harmful consequences of industrial pollution and



waste materials, including toxic chemicals, governments and NGOs round the globe promoted regulations and policies with effect of slowing down and to some extent even reverse the destruction of natural resources and its negative effect on the mankind and the society as a whole (Christmann & Taylor, 2002; Shrivastava & Berger, 2010).

Given the present situation the organizations have also to find out ways and techniques to deal with reduction in ecological footprints besides dealing with the economic issues. In order to attain success within the corporate community and to facilitate attainment of profit by the shareholders, organizations nowadays have to concentrate on social and environmental factors along with economical and financial factors (Daily, Bishop, & Steiner, 2007; Govindarajulu & Daily, 2004). The successful implementation of these sustainable corporate strategies within an organization requires both strong leadership and a concrete process (Glavas, Senge, & Cooperrider, 2010). The sustainability issue is fast moving up on the list of priorities of the leaders of corporate world as the awareness on incorporating “green” into the corporate strategy is making its way in business, but still the topic is not comfortable with most practitioners in the HR environment (Wirtenberg, Harmon, Russell, & Fairfield, 2007).

To implement any corporate environmental program several units of an organization HR, Marketing, IT, Finance, and so on, work together to put forward a positive joint effort and among them, the most important contributor is the human resource management unit. No doubt, the corporate world is a major stakeholder in the discussion about environmental issues and therefore conforms to be an important part of the solution to the environmental hazard. There is clear evidence that in the business world, a large part of the workforce feels strongly about the environment as employees today are more committed and satisfied with the organizations that take a proactive part in endorsing green. In the past two decades, a worldwide consensus has emerged around the need for proactive environmental management (González-Benito & González-Benito, 2006). Building upon this green concept numerous literatures on Green marketing (Peattie, 1992), Green accounting

(Bebbington, 2001; Owen, 1992), Green retailing (Kee-hung, Cheng, & Tang, 2010), and Green management in general (McDonagh & Prothero, 1997) have impregnated the field of management. Moreover, the active participation of corporate sector in adoption of environment management strategies (Boiral, 2002; González-Benito & González-Benito, 2006), made way for green management prospective.

Human Resource Management (HRM) is an important faction of management that deals with the most valuable assets of an organization which is human resources. The whole context of HRM is currently being considered in the light of sustainability all over. Expanding the statement, we contend that Green Human Resource Management is the most significant element of sustainability. In this paper, we exclusively focus on the topic Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) where the Human Resource Management (HRM) is engaged in managing the environment within an organization. Mampra (2013) defines Green HRM as the use of HRM policies to encourage the sustainable use of resources within business enterprises and promote the cause of environmentalism which further boosts up employee morale and satisfaction. Others describe Green HRM as the use of HRM policies, philosophies, and practices to promote sustainable use of business resources and thwart any untoward harm arising from environmental concerns in organizations (Zoogah, 2011).

Green initiatives within HRM form part of wider programs of corporate social responsibility. Green HR essentially consists of two major elements namely environment-friendly HR practices and the preservation of knowledge capital (Mandip, 2012). Within an organization, human resource and their systems are the basic foundation of any business, be it financial business or sustainable business. They are the ones responsible for planning and executing those eco-friendly policies to create a green atmosphere. We argue that without facilitating the human resource and implementing sustainable policies, going green would be a hard nut to crack.

Though a substantial extent of existing literature deals with the topic of Green HRM, there is still ambiguity associated with the effective



implementation of green HR management policies in organizations round the globe to attain absolute green corporate culture. This article comprehends how corporations are taking initiatives to endorse environment management program by developing human resource policies and ascertain different processes involved in green HRM on the basis of extant literature in the area. Further, we move on to reviewing the literature on the HR aspects of GHRM, which helps in identifying how corporations today develop human resource policies for going green. The study also aims to provide simplified insight on some common GHRM processes and attempts to suggest some green initiatives for HR.

Objectives of the study

The main purpose of this study is to:

- Provide with a basic understanding of green HRM to the readers,
- Highlight different significant works on green HRM by other workers, and
- Elaborate on various green practices that can be incorporated for building a Green workplace.
- Attempts to suggest some green initiatives for HR.

Methodology used

The study is primarily based upon the secondary data. For this extant literature related to the topic from different databases, websites and other available sources were collected. A systematic review of collected literature was done in detail.

What is Green HRM?

The term Green HRM has become the buzz word within the business field at present and its significance is increasing manifold with the passage of time. This term has also its secured position as a hot topic in recent research works since the awareness on environmental management and sustainable development has been increasingly rising day by day all round the globe. Today the topic Green HRM not only includes awareness toward environmental

affairs, but also stands for the social as well as economical well-being of both the organization and the employees within a broader prospect.

Before proceeding further, first of all we take up the question, “what is Green HRM?” Different authors have given different definitions for this term such as—“Green HRM is the use of HRM policies to promote the sustainable use of resources within organizations and, more generally promotes the causes of environment sustainability” (Marhatta & Adhikari, 2013, p. 2). GHRM is directly responsible in creating green workforce that understands, appreciates, and practices green initiative and maintains its green objectives all throughout the HRM process of recruiting, hiring, training, compensating, developing, and advancing the firms human capital (Mathapati, 2013, p. 2). It refers to the policies, practices, and systems that make employees of the organization green for the benefit of the individual, society, natural environment, and the business (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014, p. 104).

Literature review

The extant literature in the HR field on the topic of sustainability suggests that more and more HR executives are keen to modulate their corporation as such to become exclusive environmental champions. A great extent of empirical research highlights the impact of environment management practices on performance of the organization using different parameters (Iraldo, Testa, & Frey, 2009; Yang, Lin, Chan, & Sheu, 2010).

Literature has given importance to adoption of environmental practices as a key objective of organizational functioning making it important to identify with the support of human resource management practices. (Cherian & Jacob, 2012, p. 25). Haden, Oyler, and Humphrey (2009) comprehend that the integration of environmental objectives and strategies along with the strategic development goals of a company results in an effective environment management system. Daily and Huang (2001) proposed that organizations essentially need to balance the industrial growth as well as preservation of the environment because it has been confirmed that by endorsing green



practices, the companies may profit more than before (Murari & Bhandari, 2011). The Human Resource Department of an organization plays a significant role in the creation of their company's sustainability culture (Harmon, Fairfield, & Wirtenberg, 2010). It is identified that the greater the strength of green human resource policies, the greater is the intensity of adoption of environment management systems (EMS) and policies by the different companies (Bohdanowicz, Zientara, & Novotna, 2011).

Various contemporary scholars have augmented the understanding and studies on Green HRM in recent years (Berrone & Gomez-Mejia, 2009; Jabbour, Santos, & Nagano, 2010; Massoud, Daily, & Bishop, 2008; Renwick, 2008; Stringer, 2009). Green HRM depends on the unique and identifiable patterns of green decisions and behaviors of HR managers (green signatures; Jackson, Renwick, Jabbour, & Muller-Camen, 2011).

The incorporation of environmental objectives and strategies into the overall strategic development goals of a company helps in arriving at an effective EMS (Haden et al., 2009). There are various researchers who support the HRM practices to be effective for promotion of human capital and results in providing to contributors of organizational performance and competitive advantage (Boselie, Paauwe, & Jansen, 2001). Distinguished policies in the field of recruitment, performance and appraisal management, training and personnel development, employee relations, and reward systems are considered powerful tools for aligning employees with a company's environmental strategy (Renwick, 2008). Several workers argue that in order to implement an effective corporate green management system, it is important to promote a great deal of technical and management skills among all employees of the organization (Daily et al., 2007; Unnikrishnan & Hegde, 2007), whereas, others propose that organizations look at development of innovative tools and initiatives of environment management (EM) which will significantly impact sustainability of the firm and promote a competitive advantage (Hart, 1997; Lin, Jones, & Hsieh, 2001).

Therefore, to expand such a framework, it becomes definitive to have effective human resource management practices including presentation of strict recruitment strategies (Grolleau, Mzoughi, & Pekovic, 2012), appraisal, and reward systems which include environmental awareness and implementation in their evaluation process (Jabbour, Jabbour, Govindan, Teixeira, & Freitas, 2013) and training and empowerment programs (Unnikrishnan & Hegde, 2007) which will facilitate the evolution of new set of skills and competencies among the employees of "pro green" organizations. It is evident from the mentioned statements that whatever the method of research they apply, all of these researchers promote the ideology that is important for proper alignment of human resource management principles with objectives of green management in an organization.

Primarily this study concentrates on GHRM, which according to Dutta (2012) includes two major elements namely, environmental-friendly HR practices and the preservation of the knowledge capital. Green human resources refer to using every employee touch point/interface to promote sustainable practices and increase employee awareness and commitments on the issues of sustainability (Mandip, 2012). HR department of an organization plays a major role in making environmental responsibility a part of the corporate mission statement. Green HRM focuses on employee's environmental behavior in the company, which in turn, employees can carry on such pattern of consumption in their private life (Muster & Schrader, 2011). The main objective of green HRM is to make the employees aware of the intricacies of environment management i.e. what action is needed, how it functions, and how does it help the environment. The exercise really motivates the employees and develops a sense of pride in them for being a part of the going green program.

Green Recruitment

Attracting high-quality staff is a key HR challenge in the "war for talent" (Renwick et al., 2013, p. 2). Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, and Eberly (2008) in their study on turnover and



retention of employees argue that the most important benefit dimensions of HR and sustainability are retention/recruitment and satisfaction. Firms are now beginning to recognize the fact that gaining reputation as a green employer is an effective way to attract new talent (Phillips, 2007; Stringer, 2009). German firms such as Siemens, BASF, Bayer and Mannesmann use environmental activities and a green image to attract high-quality staff. The Rover Group carmaker, in Britain, makes environmental responsibilities and qualifications part of every job profile (Wehrmeyer, 1996, p. 30). Increasingly, green job descriptions with environmental aspects are now being included for employees within the recruitment agenda. Green recruitment can be defined as the process of hiring individuals with knowledge, skills, approaches, and behaviors that identify with environmental management systems within an organization. According to Wehrmeyer (1996), recruitment practices can support effective environmental management by making sure that new entrants are familiar with an organization's environmental culture and are capable of maintaining its environmental values.

Green recruiting is a system where the focus is given on importance of the environment and making it a major element within the organization. Complementing this, the recruits are also enthusiastic, and to some extent, passionate about working for an environment friendly "green" company. Recruiting candidates with green bend of mind make it easy for firms to induct professionals who are aware with sustainable processes and are already familiar with basics like recycling, conservation, and creating a more logical world. Grolleau et al. (2012) in their study on impact of environmental standards of a company on recruitment of an employee found that environmental commitment of the company adds to profile of a company. In their primary survey, they found that professionals were more concerned with respect to the environmental strategy of a company.

Contemplating these statements, we conclude that green recruitment provides the employer with an opportunity to stand ahead of the crowd

and further increase their chance of attracting the candidates and retain them after induction. Corroborating the recent green trend, we propose that the recruitment process be aligned with environment-friendly issues. Further research should address questions related to the green employer's enthusiasm in achieving the environmental goals and how the potential job seekers perceive or rate them on the parameters of sustainability as claimed. For example, do the employers include green job descriptions, eco-friendly locations, paper less interviews, and such other practices in their recruitment portfolio? Are the new recruits made aware of the environmental policies and allegiance of the company at the commencement of the job itself? Research addressing these questions will help the new recruits to carry on with the green policies as well as cooperate with the management in establishing green policies to achieve the goals of the company.

Green Performance Management

Performance management (PM) is the process by which employees are prompted to enhance their professional skills that help to achieve the organizational goals and objectives in a better way. The recognition of the corporate strategy culminates into the PM. With the EM affecting global business strategy, PM is also being influenced by the green wave in a possible positive manner. Green performance management consists of issues related to environmental concerns and policies of the company. It also concentrates on use of environmental responsibilities. Epstein and Roy (1997) in their study concluded that when HR managers integrate environmental performance into PM systems they safeguard environment management against any damage. Today some firms deal with the issue of PM by installing corporate-wide environmental performance standards, and Green information systems/audits to gain useful data on environmental performance (Marcus & Fremeth, 2009).

The most important aspect of PM is performance appraisal. In addition to meeting the criteria of reliability, validity, and fairness, effective performance appraisals provide useful feedback to employees and support continuous



improvements in the firm's environmental outcomes (Jackson et al., 2011, p. 7). Issues involved in environmental PA concern the need for managers to be held accountable for EM performance in addition to wider performance objectives (Renwick et al., 2013, p. 5). We suggest that future research on green performance appraisal should focus upon issues such as environmental incidents, environmental responsibilities, communication of environmental policy, and green information system and audits. The job description should be aligned with green tasks and goals to be achieved. The HR staff should modify the performance appraisal rating system to include dimensions for rating people on the following behavioral and technical competencies: teamwork, collaboration, diversity, innovation, and environmental stewardship. Such competencies would reinforce the company's core values (Liebowitz, 2010, p. 53). Managers should discuss the performance of the employees and give the needed feedback not only during the scheduled time of appraisal, but also all round the year. This practice will help the employees to enhance their knowledge, skills and ability.

Green Initiatives by HR

Organizations across the world are incorporating and working toward implementing GHRM practices to gain competitive advantages among the corporate world. Complete adoption and integration of GHRM in business is not impossible but requires a changed approach toward the existing HR practices on part of both the management as well as employees simultaneously. A key role for HR environmental executives could be to guide line managers in terms of gaining full staff cooperation toward implementing environmental policies which means HR needs to nurture supporters and create networks of problem-solvers willing to act to change the current status quo (Sathyapriya, Kanimozhi, & Adhilakshmi, 2014, p. 32). There are numerous issues related to GHRM that is to be taken into account by HR department before implementing green initiatives and, all of them can be not contained within a single document.

Owing to the space limit the following section of the paper briefly focus upon some of the major green initiatives for HR departments.

Green Training and Development

Green training and development educate employees about the value of EM, train them in working methods that conserve energy, reduce waste, diffuse environmental awareness within the organization, and provide opportunity to engage employees in environmental problem-solving (Zoogah, 2011). Green T&D activities make employees aware of different aspects and value of environment management. It helps them to embrace different methods of conservation including waste management within an organization. Further, it sharpens the skill of an employee to deal with different environmental issues. Ramus (2002) in a survey of managers, on best management practices concluded that environmental training and education, along with establishing a favorable environmental culture for the employees where they feel that they are the part of environmental outcomes, were the most important HRM processes that facilitate the achievement of environmental goals. Liebowitz (2010), in his study on the role of HR in achieving a sustainability culture, suggests that the HR Department can offer leadership development workshops to help managers develop their "front wheel" soft, people skills, or behavioral competencies, in teamwork, diversity, managing change, and collaboration (p. 3). Future research that facilitate green training on one hand and helps organizations on the other to develop eco-friendly managers who without any hesitation can indulge as well as promote sustainability throughout the process would be particularly useful.

Concluding the above discussion, we envisage that the need of the hour is: organizations should train their employees on best business practices enthused with green initiatives. Besides, sustainable training and education employees should also be adept to educate the customers regarding the advantages of becoming more earth-friendly and buying green products.

Green Compensation

In the context of Green HRM, rewards and



compensation can be assumed as potential tools for supporting environmental activities in organizations. In accordance to a strategic approach for reward and management, modern organizations are developing reward systems to encourage eco-friendly initiatives embarked upon by their employees. The statement is supported by a survey conducted in the UK by CIPD/KPMG that estimated that 8% of UK firms were rewarding green behaviors with various types of awards and/or financial incentives (Phillips, 2007, p. 9), and these practices can be effective in motivating employees to generate eco-initiatives (Ramus, 2002). In a similar study by Forman and Jorgensen (2001) on the importance of employee participation in environmental programs, it was observed that employee commitment to environment management programs was increased when they were offered compensation to take up duties in relation to environmental responsibility. The efficacy of green rewards and compensation was best observed in a study conducted by Berrone and Gomez-Mejia (2009) on 469 US firms operating in high-polluting industries. They found that the firms having eco-friendly performance paid their CEOs more than non-eco-friendly firms. They also concluded that long-term company results in accordance to pay were associated with greater pollution prevention success. Literature review reveals that incentives encourage executives to use accounting and other works to achieve short-term results and enrich themselves (Benz & Frey, 2007; Denis, Hanouna, & Sarin, 2006). Though compensation and rewards increase green initiatives in organizations, it can never be completely free from some malpractices. Developing effective monetary incentives can be challenging due to the difficulty of accurately and fairly evaluating environmental behaviors and performance (Fernández, Junquera, & Ordiz, 2003). Hence, we agree with Gupta (2008) that companies need to design energy-efficient products and processes, and devise incentives to accelerate their acceptance (p. 4). It is suggested that if green rewards and compensation system are aligned to the process of HRM, then a green culture in

organizations can be encouraged. By incorporating elements of green management in the compensation program, managers can promote the green behaviors among the employees. Further, managers can ask employees to bring specific green ideas pertaining to their individual jobs which can be through mutual decisions included into the objectives to attain in for the upcoming year. Attaining these objectives would be the basis of receiving incentives.

Employee compensation programs can be modified to give bonuses based in part on the employee's appraisal ratings on the behavioral and technical competencies. In addition, employees could be awarded bonuses for their outstanding work on special projects (Liebowitz, 2010, p. 53). Green rewards can include the use of workplace and lifestyle benefits, ranging from carbon credit offsets to free bicycles, to engage people in the green agenda while continuing to recognize their contribution (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2014, p. 1). Last, but not the least, more emphasis should be given on researches which determine effective approaches that will help to design and implement green compensation practices and may lead to the achievement of corporate environmental goals.

Green building

The organizations round the globe are considerably opting for green building as their workplace and offices as an alternative to traditional offices. The phenomenon is quite trend setting as Green buildings fulfill certain criterion for reducing the exploitation of natural resources that are utilized in their construction. Furthermore, green buildings include some enhanced features related to green practices such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, and storm water management. Recent years have witnessed a great upsurge in adoption of green buildings by organizations at a fast pace. The business world has become increasingly aware of the significant role played by green buildings while dealing with environmental issues. Green buildings also serve as a platform for financial savings for organizations as their construction and engineering involve low cost. Business giants like Ford, Pepsico, etc. are



committed to sustainability and have included green building design principles into their buildings. Fortune 1000 companies are adopting company-wide sustainability policies that have increased the demand for work space in Green or sustainable buildings.

Conclusion

It is not a hidden fact that human resource is the most important asset of an organization that plays an important role in managing the employees. At the moment, the recent increased trend of corporate focus on greening the business, the modern HR managers have been assigned with additional responsibility of incorporating the Green HR philosophy in corporate mission statement along with HR policies. Changes in corporate perspectives related to the environmental initiatives can be seen in written policy statements, environmental job titles, marketing strategies, capital investments, auditing practices, new product design and development, and production processes (Molina-Azorín, Claver-Cortés, Pereira-Moliner, & Tarí, 2009; Sharfman & Fernando, 2008). Green process and policies are now making their way through within the HR space complementing the existing green practices and initiatives. Green HR efforts have resulted in increased efficiencies, cost reduction, employee retention, and improved productivity, besides other tangible benefits.

Though the green movement and Green HR are still in the stages of infancy, growing awareness within organizations of the significance of green issues have compelled them to embrace environment-friendly HR practices with a specific focus on waste management, recycling, reducing the carbon footprint, and using and producing green products. Clearly, a majority of the employees feel strongly about the environment and, exhibit greater commitment and job satisfaction toward an organization that is ever ready to go “Green.” The effects of GHRM practices are multifaceted and require constant monitoring to recognize their potential impact on HRM issues. The Greening HRM involves specific HR’s policies and practices aligned with the three sustainability pillars—environment, social, and economic balance

(Yusliza, Ramayah, & Othman, 2015, p. 1) The responsibility of the present generations, HR managers are to create awareness among the youngsters and among the people working for the organization about the Green HRM, Green movement, utilization of natural resources and helping the corporate to maintain proper environment, and retain the natural resources for our future generation i.e. sustainable development(Mathapati, 2013, p. 2).

The future of Green HRM appears promising for all the stakeholders of HRM, be it the employers, employees, practitioners, or academicians. We propose that GHRM has substantial scope for research in management field but lacks behind in practice within academic arena; hence, there is a need to bridge the gap between professional GHRM practices and preaches in research and teaching environmental management. Pushing further, we look forward to see more research on this topic in near future, which can highlight the role of HRM activities in supporting green initiatives and to some extent even influencing environmental management strategies. Studies that observe the overall impact of GHRM systems rather than individual practices would be particularly helpful in this respect. Such studies can help organizations to reduce degradation of the environment become healthier both physically and financially and, make the world a cleaner and safer place to live. On the concluding note, we would like to add that HR is the major role player in implementing GHRM practices and policies. Apart from this, they have a crucial role to play in recruitment of new employees who are more responsible toward green business practices thus, indirectly saving the Earth. Last, but not the least, HR has significant opportunity to contribute to the organization’s green movement and plays important role in enthusing, facilitating, and motivating employees for taking up green practices for greener business.

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