




# Sustainable Practices Contextualized to Training and Development within HR and OB

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**Abstract.** Training and development in business organizations have evolved beyond conventional approaches, integrating sustainability as a pivotal component. The intersection of sustainability with Organizational Behavior (OB) and Human Resources (HR) signifies a strategic alignment towards ethical, responsible, and environmentally conscious practices. This integration addresses not only the professional growth of employees but also their role in shaping a sustainable future for both the organization and the broader society.

In this era of heightened awareness about environmental and social responsibility, companies are recognizing the imperative of incorporating sustainability into all aspects of their operations. Training and development, being the cornerstones of organizational growth and effectiveness, are no exception. This paper delves into the emerging trends where training and development practices are converging with sustainability principles within the domains of OB and HR.

The sustainable practices discussed herein encompass a range of initiatives, from fostering diversity and inclusion to promoting a circular economy, reducing waste, and embracing environmentally conscious leadership. These practices are crucial not only for the well-being of the environment but also for enhancing employee engagement, improving organizational performance, and nurturing a positive organizational culture. This exploration aims to shed light on the current trends in training and development that emphasize sustainability by providing relevant examples to illustrate how organizations are embracing and reaping the benefits of this innovation approach. Understanding these trends is vital for organizations seeking to navigate the changing landscape of business, aligning their training strategies with sustainability goals and contributing to a more sustainable future.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Social Responsibility, Diversity and Inclusion Stakeholders.

## 1 Introduction

Sustainability is a concept that refers to satisfying current needs without endangering the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own needs. Ensuring the long-term well-being of people and the planet requires striking a balance between economic, social, and environmental factors. Sustainable Human Resource Management (SHRM) and Organizational Behaviour (OB) refer to approaches within an organization that integrate sustainability principles into HRM practices and employee behaviours. One of the SHRM principles, HR development, implies that employee development should be done with a long-term view in mind and should be continuously implemented together with other SHRM principles. The aim is to ensure that HRM strategies, employee behaviour, and organizational culture align with sustainability goals and contribute to environmental, social, and economic well-being.

An organisation success and growth is measured by business expansion and employee development. The employee must be provided with the opportunity to learn and extend their knowledge which is the key factor to the success of the organisation. Employee performance can be significantly enhanced with training and development. Sustainable training and development in Human Resources (HR) and Organizational Behaviour (OB) promotes long-term sustainability, ethical practices, employee well-being, and organizational success.

Sustainable training in HR and OB emphasizes ethical leadership and ensures that organizational values align with sustainability principles, promoting responsible decision-making and actions at all levels of the organization and enhance employee engagement by aligning employees' personal values with the organization's sustainability goals. Engaged employees are more likely to stay with the company, leading to improved retention rates. It promotes DEI initiatives, ensuring a diverse and inclusive workforce. Diverse perspectives and backgrounds contribute to innovation and creativity, enhancing the organization's adaptability and overall sustainability and prepares employees for organizational changes and promotes adaptability. Sustainability initiatives often require significant organizational changes, and a workforce that can adapt smoothly is crucial for successful sustainability implementation. Creating sustainable training and development programs involves considering various factors that contribute to their effectiveness, longevity, and alignment with organizational and societal sustainability goals

The Key factors to consider in making training and development sustainable:-

- Alignment of training with organisation sustainability strategy
- Involve key stakeholders in design and development
- Integrate sustainability training into job roles and responsibilities
- Accessibility and inclusivity to accommodate a diverse work force.

## 2 Review of literature

The concept of sustainability originated in late 1970's due to environmental pollution which led to the discussion of sustainability and sustainable development. Bruntland [3] states that sustainable development is the progress that meets the presents requirement without compromising the requirements for the future generation. The concept of requirement in particular the vital requirements of the world, to which is overriding priority to be given with the limitations enforced by the state of technology and social grouping of the environments capability to meet present and future requirements. Pearce, Makandia & Barbier [4] stated that sustainable development involves developing a social and economic system, which ensures that these goals are continuous, i.e. that real incomes rise, that educational standards grow, that the health of the nation develops, that the general quality of life is advanced. In the broader sense, sustainability refers to the ability to maintain or support a process constantly over time. In business contexts, sustainability seeks to prevent the exhaustion of natural or physical resources, so that they will stay available for the long term [5].

Human Resource Management- as an element of HR function – in the general literature on HRM is defined as the “integrated use of training and development, career paths, and organizational development to improve individual and organizational effectiveness” stated by Katarzyna Piwowar-Sulej[1] relates the development of workforces to such concepts as learning, performance, and changes. The main mechanism of human resources development is appropriate training. Training means a “systematic development of the knowledge, skills, and expertise required by a person to effectively perform a given task or job” [1, 2]. Initiatives for training and development are learning programs designed

within an organization to help individuals or teams to perform better on the job. Numerous businesses have made significant investments in their employees' education and training on doing so may enhance organizational personnel's skills and increase their competitiveness stated by Ya-Chin Kang [15]. Typically, these programs aim to improve an employee's knowledge and skill sets while also instilling a stronger sense of drive to improve work performance. Training programs with the aim of long-term employee development can be planned in collaboration with a learning management system. Orientations, lectures in the classroom, case studies, role plays, simulations, and computer-based training, including e-learning, are examples of common training techniques. The majority of employee training and development initiatives are spearheaded by an organization's human resource development (HRD) department, which is sometimes referred to as HRD [7]. Employee training has been shown to improve organizational performance, according to empirical research. As an example, studies on the impact of employee training on work outcomes (Russell, Terborg, and Power Citations 1985)[16]; Dastmalchian and Blyton Citation 1992)[17], workplace and industrial relations climate (Dastmalchian, Blyton, and Adamson Citation 1991)[18], productivity and quality of customer service (Castellanos and Martín Citation 2011)[19], and firms' financial performance (Bassi, Ludwig, McMurrer and Van Buren Citation 2002; Castellanos and Martín Citation 2011)[19][20] have all shown a major positive impact.

Sustainable practices in training and development reveals a growing emphasis on the importance of integrating sustainability principles into employee learning and skill development. Michael Muller-2020 Cammen defined sustainable HRM as "those long-term oriented conceptual approaches and activities aimed at socially and economically responsible recruitment and selection, development, deployment, and release of employees" [10]. Sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM) principles involve integrating sustainable practices into an organization's HR functions. These principles help organizations create a workforce that contributes to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Some key sustainable HRM principles are Strategic Alignment, Leadership Commitment, Employee Engagement, Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Performance Management, initiatives, Diversity and Inclusion, Work-Life Balance, Health and Safety, Supply Chain Sustainability, Stakeholder Engagement, Reporting and

Transparency, Continuous Improvement, Legal and Ethical Compliance and Innovation. Sustainable training and development programs benefit organizations, employees, and society by promoting responsible and ethical business practices, improving performance, and reducing environmental impact. These programs contribute to an organization's long-term sustainability, competitiveness, and overall success in a changing global landscape.

## 2.1 Stakeholders in design and development:

Involving key stakeholders in designing training and development programs is essential to ensure that the programs meet the organization's needs and are aligned with its strategic objectives. Key stakeholders can include senior leaders, employees, HR professionals, subject matter experts, and others who have a vested interest in the success of the training. Engage stakeholders in conducting needs assessments to identify the specific skills and competencies that need to be developed through training and while selecting the appropriate training method discuss whether in-person, e-learning, workshops, simulations, or a combination of these will be most effective. Stakeholders can provide insights on customizing training programs to fit the specific needs and learning styles of employees in different roles and departments. Regular feedback from stakeholders during the design process and its implementation helps in fine-tuning the content, delivery methods and ensure that resources are allocated effectively. Gain the support of senior leaders and executives, their involvement and endorsement of the training initiatives can significantly influence success.

## 2.2 Sustainability training into job roles and responsibilities

Integrating sustainability training into job roles and responsibilities is a proactive approach to fostering a culture of sustainability within an organization. This ensures that employees at all levels understand and actively contribute to sustainability goals. The following gives a summary of the roles and responsibility of stakeholders

**Table 1.** Roles and responsibilities of key project stakeholders.

Project Role	Responsibilities	Comments
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Executive Sponsor	A person or group who provides resources and support for the project and is accountable for enabling success	Help eliminate barriers. Approves final plan
Project Lead	Main person accountable for the success of the project .Work plan, resources allocation, risk management, scope change control, milestones monitoring, and communicates project status to all stakeholders.	Authority to manage people, conflict, risk and issues. If not an MPP, seek authority from supervisor
Project Coordinator	Coordinates project effort from start to end .Applies project management methodologies and tools to ensure project deliver the expected results within scope, time, and budget.	Limits authority over resources, escalates risk, issues and people management matters to the project lead.
Functional/Technical Lead	SME responsible for leading the efforts of a functional or technical area (e.g. CMS,CO, Networking, etc.)	Authority to assign work and resources
Team Member (Subject Matter Experts-SMEs)	Staff members who exhibit high level of expertise in a specialized job, task or skill. SMEs are responsible for performing specific tasks of the project to achieve its objectives (e.g. Sysadmin, Web Developer, Business Analyst etc.).They help defining requirements and are often heavily involved in testing and training.	They report progress of their work, and related issues or risk to the project Lead and project Coordinator.

Table 1 (Sonoma State University, Project Management) states that The roles and responsibilities are general definitions that may be adjusted and customized to meet the unique requirements of any project, Develop job-specific sustainability training modules tailored to the roles and responsibilities of employees that address the identified competencies. Customizing training content to align with the needs of different departments and job functions. Link sustainability competencies and performance in job roles to performance reviews and assessments. Im-

plement assessment tools to measure employees' understanding and application of sustainability concepts in their job roles.

Encourage employees to share their sustainability success stories and strategies with colleagues, creating a culture of peer learning and motivation. By integrating sustainability training into job roles and responsibilities, organizations can create a more environmentally and socially responsible workforce. This not only contributes to sustainability goals but also enhances an organization's reputation and competitive advantage in an increasingly conscious business world.

### **2.3 Accessibility and inclusivity of diverse workforce**

To ensure accessibility and inclusivity in training and development and accommodate a diverse workforce, organizations need to adopt inclusive practices that consider the needs and preferences of all employees, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or learning styles. Providing training materials in various formats, such as written text, video, audio, and interactive formats and use accessible document formats to ensure compatibility with screen readers and other assistive technologies. Diverse group of trainers and facilitators who can relate to and understand the experiences and backgrounds of the participants would help in recognizing diverse workforce.

### **2.4 Competencies of future:**

Future sustainable practices in training and development will focus on minimizing detrimental effects on the environment and society while providing individuals with the skills and information need to prosper in a world that is changing quickly. The future of sustainable training and development is expected to be shaped by the following major trends and practices.

- **Digital and Remote Learning:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to digital learning. This trend is likely to continue, reducing the need for physical resources and minimizing the environmental impact associated with commuting and infrastructure.
- **Personalized Learning Paths:** Adaptive learning technologies will become more prominent, allowing individuals to tailor their

learning journey. This reduces wasted time and resources on irrelevant content.

- **Eco-friendly Learning Materials:** The shift from printed textbooks to digital resources reduces paper waste. Furthermore, the use of renewable energy for data centres and the development of more energy-efficient devices will contribute to sustainability.
- **Blended Learning Models:** Combining online and in-person training allows for flexibility while reducing the need for large, energy-consuming facilities.
- **Green Training Facilities:** When in-person training is necessary, the emphasis will be on green and sustainable training facilities. These may include solar-powered classrooms, rainwater harvesting, and other environmentally friendly features.
- **Renewable Energy Education:** As the world transitions to renewable energy sources, there will be a growing need for training in these areas, both to develop a skilled workforce and to promote sustainable practices.
- **Sustainable Workforce Development:** Companies will increasingly invest in training and development programs that focus on sustainability and corporate social responsibility, aligning with the broader goal of a greener future.
- **Circular Economy Training:** Preparing individuals to work in the circular economy will be crucial. This includes training in recycling, upcycling, and sustainable resource management.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Training:** Building a diverse and inclusive workforce will continue to be a priority. Training programs will focus on DEI, promoting equality and social sustainability.
- **Lifelong Learning:** The pace of change in technology and society means that individuals will need to engage in lifelong learning. Training and development programs will be designed to support continuous skill development throughout one's career.
- **Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR):** These technologies will play a significant role in hands-on training while reducing the need for physical resources.
- **Mental Health and Well-being Training:** Recognizing the importance of mental health, training programs will increasingly include elements of well-being, stress management, and mental health support.



- **Measuring and Reporting Impact:** The measurement and reporting of the environmental and social impact of training and development programs will become more important. Organizations will aim to quantify their contributions to sustainability
- **Global Collaboration:** Collaboration across borders and industries will be essential to address global sustainability challenges. Training programs may focus on developing cross-cultural and interdisciplinary skills.
- **Sustainable Credentials:** The importance of certifications and credentials in sustainability-related fields will grow. Training programs will align with these certifications to provide recognized qualifications.
- **Gamification and Micro learning:** These techniques can make learning more engaging and efficient, reducing the time and resources required for training.
- **Sustainable training and development practices** will continue to evolve, emphasizing not only the acquisition of skills and knowledge but also their positive impact on the environment and society. See Fig. 1

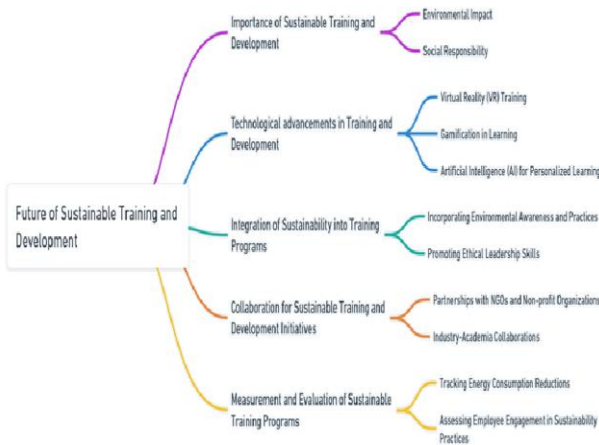


Fig. 1 Future of Sustainable Training and development

## **2.5 Remote mobile training**

Businesses have realized that employees now require training on when, when, and how to use their growth experiences to enhance performance in addition to the knowledge that they already possess. Businesses now rely increasingly on mobile workers due to advancements in mobile technologies. Training is moving to mobile devices, where applications give workers across sectors "just-in-time" information and suggestions. [8]

## **2.6 Training in artificial intelligence**

AI systems are comparable to humans in their ability to process unstructured data. These systems are capable of comprehending aural stimuli, visuals, scripts, and linguistic patterns. Learners can receive tailored training content via AI-based software that takes into account their learning preferences, historical performance, and anticipated training needs. [8]

## **2.7 Learning Agility**

Agile learning is a technique that inspires organizational transformation and acceptance by encouraging individuals to learn by doing and reiterating repeatedly. Businesses such as IBM have launched IBM Garage, a platform designed to help manage, scale, and carry out an organization's many transformation projects. IBM Garages are being used globally by companies such as Ford Motor Company and Travelport to foster a culture of open affiliation and ongoing learning.[8]

## **3 Materials and Methods:**

Secondary data materials are used in this research as sources of information to support and inform sustainable training and development initiatives which has given valuable insights, statistics, research findings, and best practices related to sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility. The secondary data materials that has been used in sustainable training and development are taken from academic journals, government publications, corporate sustainability report, online database, News articles, historical data and other multimedia. Utilizing a variety of secondary

data materials has enhanced the content and effectiveness of sustainable training and development programs.

Conceptual research in sustainable training and development refers to an academic or scholarly inquiry that focuses on developing and refining theoretical concepts, models, frameworks, or ideas related to sustainable training and development practices. It involves exploring and deepening our understanding of the underlying principles and theories that underpin sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility in the context of employee training and development. Conceptual research does not involve empirical data collection but rather seeks to advance theoretical knowledge in this field

#### **4 Discussion and Conclusion:**

Sustainable practices in training and development has progressed to encompass a wide range of topics, from Environmental and Social responsibility to sustainable leadership and innovative training technologies. As organizations continue to adapt to a rapidly changing world, sustainability remains a critical element in shaping training and development programs that meet both business and societal needs.

The integration of sustainable practices into training and development represents a crucial evolution in the fields of Organizational Behaviour (OB) and Human Resources (HR). This shift is not merely a response to societal and environmental pressures but a strategic imperative for organizations seeking long-term success and ethical responsibility. As we conclude our exploration of these sustainable practices, several key take-aways become apparent.

Sustainability in training and development equips the employees with the knowledge, skills, and mind-sets necessary to operate sustainably, organizations are not only safeguarding the planet but also future-proofing their businesses. This holistic approach aligns the organization's goals with societal and environmental needs, ultimately leading to a more sustainable and prosperous future. Embracing a diverse workforce and fostering an inclusive culture is not only a matter of social justice but also a strategy for promoting innovative and sustainable practices. Sustainable practices in training and development are rooted in the principles of a circular economy, waste reduction, and responsible sourcing. These concepts are not only good for the environment but can yield significant

cost savings for organizations. As we look towards the future, the field of training and development is poised for transformative research that emphasizes sustainability.

In conclusion, the integration of sustainable practices in training and development is not a passing trend but a paradigm shift that is defining the future of work. It is the key to unlocking innovative solutions, enhancing employee engagement, and meeting the growing demands of an environmentally conscious society. Future research in sustainable practices in training and development has the potential to drive positive change, fostering a more responsible and environmentally conscious approach to learning within organizations that recognizes the value of sustainable training and development are better positioned to thrive in an ever-evolving and sustainable future.

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