Accountancy Business and the Public Interest
ISSN: 1745-7718

Volume: 40
Issue Number: 12

SDGs 4A (AWARENESS, ADAPTATION, ACTION, ACHIEVEMENT) MODEL

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Abstract

The United Nations (UN) sustainable development goals (SDGs) concept was adopted by hundred and ninety-three countries in the year 2015. Since than governments, corporates and individuals are putting their efforts for creating the awareness, adaptation, action and achievement of SDGs in their respective domain. This paper proposed the 4A framework (awareness, adaptation, action and achievement) for SDGs integration in business schools based on the literature analysis.

Keywords: SDGs, Awareness, Adaptation, Action, Achievement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability, and Sustainable development (SD) had covered the long journey since Brundtland Report (1987), around the SD definition; meet the needs of present without compromising the future. Governments, corporates, societies and individuals plan their initiatives and activities around the SD definition, but most of the actions was voluntary. The continuous degradation in the economic, social and environmental performance had bothered all the major stakeholders to take the corrective action and rolled out the road map for future. The year 2015, becomes the witness for the change, the United Nations (2015) had introduced the seventeen sustainable development goals (SDGs), for addressing the issues related to climate change, poverty, inequality and other broader issues of economic, social and environmental concern (Yamane, Tomomi & Kaneko, Shinji; 2022).

One hundred ninety-three countries agreed and signed the United Nations, 17 SDGs agenda and the timeline of 2030 for the adaptation and execution of the same. The equal initiative was required at the level of government, corporates, societies and individuals to execute the action plan. The challenges were same for all stakeholders in deciding the initiation plan of action towards SDGs, the more active role was required on the part of businesses (Scott and McGill; 2019). The creative and innovative ideas may help the businesses to bridge the gap between SDGs adaption and execution (United Nations; 2015). The appropriate resource allocation is required for integrating SDGs with main stream business (United Nations Secretary-General, 2019), SDGs adaptation may help the organization in integrating SD across business activities and value chain (Fukuda-Parr and McNeill; 2019).

SDGs growing awareness among young generation and stakeholders is increasing demand for sustainable products and consumption, forcing the business organizations to integrate SDGs in their activities and aligned the sustainability (Severo et al.,2019). The SDGs compliances, regulatory environment and awareness among stakeholders, pushing the businesses to set their standards for achieving the desired results (Mio et al., 2020). On the one side some studies highlighted the SDGs washing concept (Nishitani et al., 2019), on the other side many companies started to embedding SDGs into their corporate strategies (Yamane, Tomomi & Kaneko, Shinji; 2022). A survey captured the practitioners view point in the year 2019 on SDGs integration with corporate strategies, mentioned that 71% companies integrated SDGs with strategies comparing to 60% in 2017 (Ethical Corporation, 2019b).

Those businesses facing challenges in integrating SDGs, has to integrate the sustainability in their core business and has to embed targets across business functions (SDG Compass,2015). The companies have to rework on the business models to integrate the SDGs in business activities, so that stakeholder's perspective may change from charitable to profitable and creation of economic value (Yamane, Tomomi & Kaneko, Shinji; 2022). Multiple studies highlighted the importance of stakeholder's role in achieving SDGs integration with business strategies (Freeman, 1984; Freudenreich et al., 2020; Horisch et al., 2014; Parmar et al., 2010). The SDGs integration with business strategies has to create the value for stakeholders (Horisch et al., 2014). Stakeholders awareness and motivation about sustainability and SDGs are must for creating the value for them (Lee and Raschke, 2020).

The existing literature explored the motivation of businesses for integrating SDGs with business activities and strategies, and also mentioned about creating the value for stakeholders. Our study will explore the stakeholder's awareness on SDGs, how they want to adapt the SDGs, action taken by the stakeholders for SDGs adaptation and do they develop any achievement measures. So our study proposed the SDGs four A model; awareness, adaptation, action and achievement. Horisch et al., (2014), mentioned about how awareness creation will help the organization in developing the stakeholder's sustainability mind set. The stakeholder's awareness on SDGs may help them adapting sustainable products, services, jobs etc. For conducting this study, we have chosen education sector, which further narrowed down to business school stakeholders.

According to Gonzalez et al., (2020), implementing the SDGs in education sector may have strong impact as students are the future leaders, so important stakeholders are, students, faculty and staff. Education sector could bring multiplier effect in SDGs implementation; students, faculty and staff are the main stakeholders (Fleaca et al., 2018; Heffernan et al., 2018; Aledo-Ruiz et al., 2022). The academic institutions have to disseminate information about sustainability; awareness, adaptation, action and implementation, and its challenges for effective integration of SDGs and its alignment with programs and activities (Shulla et al., 2020; Sinha et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2022). Implementing the SDGs in academic institutions still a challenge due to allocation of resources (Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2022). So the objectives of the study are,

a. Assessment of stakeholders SDGs awareness
b. Assessment of stakeholders SDGs adaptation
c. Assessment of stakeholders SDGs action
d. Assessment of stakeholders SDGs achievement

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review built up around conceptual framework of sustainable development goals (SDGs), SDGs interface with business education, setting the base for conceptual four A framework of stakeholders SDGs assessment; awareness, adaptation, action and achievement.

2.1 Sustainable development goals (SDGs) framework

United Nations (UN) developed the Sustainable development goals (SDGs) framework in the year 2015 after long deliberation and discussions with multiple stakeholders. The final framework had 17 goals and 169 targets for addressing the social, economic and environmental concerns and bridging the gap among nations due to inequality, poverty, climate change and other policy matters of the global discussions at large (United Nations, 2015). SDGs

achievement needs the equal action at the level of government, businesses, society and individuals. According to Pradhan (2019), 17 SDGs are interlinked with each other, so a strategic action required to prioritize the goals and standing trade off system for efficient outcome.

Over the period of time different researchers covered the wider perspective and application of SDGs in context of business functions; marketing, finance, human resources, operations, information technology, strategy (Tulder, 2018). Morioka et al., (2018) covered the eleven case studies of diverse sectors and established the connect between SDGs and business models to facilitate the organizations journey towards sustainability. The SDGs also equally contribute in multinational enterprises and spreading their reach and business activities across globe (Donoher, 2017; Kolk et al., 2017). Schramade (2017) covered the connect between SDGs and investment opportunities, Silva (2021), reviewed the financial report of 100 companies and mentioned the limited role of SDGs in context of their business model.

Jones et al., (2018), mentioned the role of marketing and advertisement for SDGs integration in businesses. According to Kapucu and Beaudet (2020), innovative approach and solutions are required to achieve the SDGs targets by 2030. Many studies covered the SDGs and its business interface, but stakeholder's preference for corporate practices to achieve the SDGs has not much explored (Yamane, Tomomi & Kaneko, Shinji; 2022).

2.2 SDGs interface with business education

Ethics, sustainability, sustainable development and other interrelated terms were started to explored in business context after 1929 economic crisis. Thinkers Chester Barnard (Barnard, 1938), and Howard Bowen (Bowen, 1953) had theorized and covered ethics and business perspective in their contribution. Pierson (1959), covered the social responsibility and its connect with businesses. International accreditation body AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) integrated the business ethics dimension in business school accreditation standards in 1967. United Nations started to integrated sustainability, sustainable development in education since 1948, Millennium development goals were introduced in the year 2000 and replaced by the SDGs in 2015 (King, 2016). Freeman (1984), introduced the stakeholder's perspective for effective integration of sustainability and sustainable development in business ecosystem.

Shulla et al., (2020), found that implementing SDGs in education could benefit students and institution, and can also help the students in developing better understanding to tackle SDGs related issues. Gonzalez et al., (2020), mentioned that SDGs based education could improve student's skills and competencies to better understand the sustainability and sustainable development. The study also empathized an effective collaboration among various stakeholders such as students, faculty, staff to better understand, coordinate and implement sustainable activities. Fleaca et al., (2018), mentioned the need of developing a broader model for integrating educational institutions activities for the benefit of faculty, staff, students and community connect. Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., (2022), empathized on the role of organizational efforts for efficient integration among institution and SDGs.

The authors mentioned the academic institutions activities for alignment with SDGs, Leal Filho (2019), highlighted the need of SDGs integration in teaching, Alcántara-Rubio et. al (2022), mentioned education and learning, research as important activities for SDGs integration in universities. Becerra et al. (2020), focused on community engagement as part of academic civic engagement to facilitate SDGs integration addressing social perspective in academic institutions. Owens (2017), mentioned the need of collaboration among various stakeholders

such as government, academic institution, society, students, faculty and staff to execute SDGs integration. The academic institutions ecosystem needs SDGs alignment with the main activities such as; teaching, research, institute activities, collaboration, stakeholders etc. for SDGs achievement.

3. STAKEHOLDERS SDGs ASSESSMENT FOUR A FRAMEWORK

The figure 1 shows suggested four A framework comprises; awareness, adaptation, action and achievement of SDGs in context of business school.

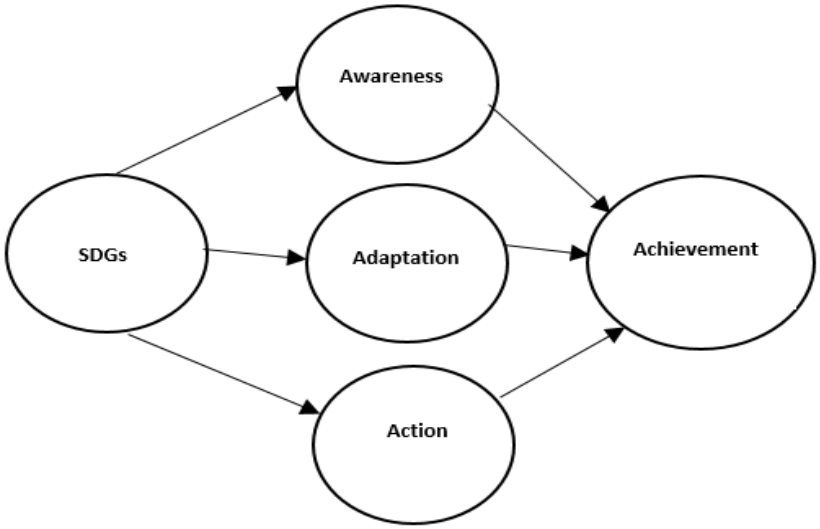

Figure 1: SDGs 4A Model

Source: Author Conceptualization

3.1 Awareness

Japan started to integrate SDGs in businesses, academics, government activities by streamlining the role of all actors (Yamane, Tomomi & Kaneko, Shinji; 2022). The government implementing the SDGs based on five principles; universality, inclusiveness, participatory approach, integrated approach, transparency, and accountability. According to Ueno et al., (2017, 2018), Japan very actively adapting the SDGs in main activities. ANA HD (2020), mentioned that raising awareness and rolling out action is common practice among businesses. As per a survey conducted in Japan in 2019, only 6.7% of the survey population was highly familiar with the SDGs. According to PwC (2015), survey on SDGs engagement, mentioned 92% SDGs awareness among businesses, and 33% awareness among general population. The other important finding of the study was, 90% citizens mentioned businesses has to initiate for SDGs, 78% of citizens mentioned they would like to buy the product and services of companies those engaged with SDGs. According to Du et al. (2010), public awareness is required for SDGs integration and achievement in companies.

According to Kolb et al. (2017), mission, vision statements of an academic institution plays an important role in integrating SDGs and sustainability if aligned with institute activities and facilitate stakeholders for future directions. The earlier studies had covered that knowledge and awareness of environmental issues facilitate environmental adaptation (Eom et al., 2016; Klockner, 2013; Tam and Chan, 2018). Companies SDGs implementation and stakeholder's priorities may differ (Yamane, Tomomi & Kaneko, Shinji; 2022), accordingly in academic's institutions SDGs implementation priorities may be different from stakeholder's preferences.

Kolb et al. (2017), mentioned SDGs prioritization for the business schools in the form of four-layer pyramid, top layer SDG 4; quality educations, initiative required at the level of faculty, students, staffs, companies, researchers. Second layer mentioned, Quality education has direct impact on decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), industry innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), partnership for the goals (SDG 17). Third layer talked about, innovation fosters; clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), life below water (SDG 14), and life on land (SDG 15). The fourth and bottom layer shows the impact in the form of outcome; no poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), good health and wellbeing (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), climate action (SDG 13) and peace justice and strong institutions (SDG 16). According to Freudenreich et al., (2019), effective communication required among stakeholders for developing sustainability mind set for reducing the gap between organization priorities and stakeholders interest and priorities.

3.2 Adaptation

Holling (2001), shared interesting thoughts on sustainable development adaptation and opportunities in the form of a dentition, that refers to; the goal of fostering adaptive capabilities and creating opportunities". As per the definition businesses has to explore the opportunity from sustainability adaptation and develop or realign the capabilities for the achievement of the same. According to Schramade (2017), importance of relevant SDGs varies from industry to industry and firm to firm. As per the same study there are two important reasons for investing in SDGs; shareholders value creation and social value creation. The authors such as Freeman (1984), considered the stakeholders value creation instead of shareholders.

According to Horisch et al., (2014), the companies has to create the value for all stakeholders, but for creating value for all stakeholders required the need assessment and motivation of stakeholders towards SDGs. Fukuda-Parr and McNeill, (2019), mentioned that value creation may enhance the SDGs adaptation among companies and stakeholders, and could emerge as new norm for businesses. The stakeholder's preference identification is must for SDGs alignment with businesses and for value creation (Yamane, Tomomi & Kaneko, Shinji; 2022).

Principle for Responsible Management Education (PRME) was introduced by the United Nations (UN) in 2007 for integrating sustainable development in business school activities. The PRME facilitate the sustainable development adaption in business schools in form of; leadership action plan towards sustainability, research, institution building activities, teaching and learning activities alignment with SD (Doh & Tashman, 2012; Sunley & Leigh, 2016).

Giselle Weybrecht (2017), identified the key stakeholders in business schools as management, faculty, staff, students, alumni, government, recruiters, business partners etc. The key activities identified was; teaching, training, research, institute operations. Schramade (2017), categorised the SDGs adaptation in three parts; SDGs that address the basic needs of "people", second, SDGs related to "planet" means concern for environment, third, SDGs related to prosperity.

3.3 Action

The action phase covered, what SDGs and activities the business school want to focus and how they are going to execute. At action stage business school has to also decide the key performance indicators for measuring the success of the action plan. Christ & Burritt (2019), conducted a study on reducing the gap between academia and industry covering the insider outsider perspective. Cortese (2003), identified four key pillars for SDGs integration in business schools; education, research, institute activities, and external community. Hays et al. (2020), identified the five key factors for successful execution of SDGs in business schools;

leadership, emergence, framework, culture and relationships. The SDGs action needs the participatory approach among all business school stakeholders.

According to Haffernan et. al., (2018), for academic institutions reputation is an important factor, action towards SDGs and sustainability may enhance the reputation. The reputation of educational institutions depends on how stakeholders think about their SDGs and sustainability initiative (Abad-Segura and Gonz´alez-Zamar, 2021; Aledo-Ruiz et al., 2022). Aledo-Ruiz et al., (2022) mentioned about strong connect between students as a stakeholder and their impact on social, environmental and economic activities of an academic institute. According to Haffernan et. al., (2018), students trust in academic institutions may further enhance the student's enrolment in the programs and institution.

3.4 Achievement

According to Schramade (2017), stakeholders wants to see the performance of organization towards SDGs integration in quantitative form, so key performance indicators (KPI) plays a very important role. The study also mentioned about impact, as the outcome of quantity and quality of performance indicating activity. Hays et al. (2020), mentioned the different activities for capturing the performance of an academic institution;

1) Training-Education: Awareness creation
2) Assessment and Monitoring: Audit
3) Partnerships- Alliances
4) Projects: Research reports, presentations, publications
5) Certifications and Accreditations: NAAC, AACSB, PRME, AMBA, EQUIS, NBA, UN Global Compact
6) Funding: NGO activities, CSR, Incubation
7) Sourcing strategy and purchasing practices: Government e Marketplace
8) Awards and Rewards: Grants, Scholarships through company collaborations on SDG projects
9) Innovation and Technology: Entrepreneurship and incubation, Patents
10) Research: Publications, project reports
11) Committees, forums, and consultations: on the panel of different boards internal and external
12) Dialogues among different stakeholders: Conferences, seminars, workshops, guest sessions

According to Schramade (2017), developing and monitoring KPI for people and prosperity is much difficult than for planet. Hays et al. (2020) mentioned the role of leaders, emergence, frameworks, culture and collaborations in achieving the SDGs in academic institutions.

4. CONCLUSION

Incorporating sustainability and sustainable development in business school activities and taking them towards the path of SDGs is the challenging and difficult task due to involvement of multiple activities and stakeholders. Our study proposed a conceptual 4A model (awareness, adaptation, action, achievement) based on the existing literature analysis. The first step towards

SDGs integration is identifying the business school stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, management, government, alumni, recruiters, society) and creating SDGs awareness among them (Yamane, Tomomi & Kaneko, Shinji; 2022). The initial journey can begin with stakeholders and activities prioritization, and future road map could be rolled out accordingly.

The second step is adaptation, according to Kolb et al. (2017), the vision, mission of an organization could be the beginning of SDGs adaptation. These statements will further strengthen the institute journey towards SDGs. All stakeholders need to be on same pace in terms of understanding and interpretation of the statements.

The third step is action, what action is required from which stakeholder and related to what activity, meaning stakeholder-activity mapping for putting SDGs into action. Cortese (2003) identified the main institutional activities as; education, research, institute activities, and external community.

The fourth and final step is the mechanism for SDGs achievement mapping system or identification of key performance indicators (KPI) for quantitative measurement. According to Schramade (2017), developing and monitoring KPI for people and prosperity is much difficult than for planet. Every step of 4A model for SDGs integration may bring its own challenges and problems for academic institutions. The solution could be creating more awareness among stakeholders and developing effective communication system to spread positive outcome and relevant information among stakeholders. The SDGs awareness and communication will further strengthen the institution reputation which leads to brand image and also enhance the stakeholders trust in the institution. This will further strengthen the stakeholders value creation, and may also enhance value for the academic institution with increase in the students' enrolment and institute overall contributions towards social, and environmental challenges.

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