

Chapter 10

Human Resource Development's Role in Communicating the Risk of Climate Change and Promoting Pro-Environmental Behavioural Changes

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ABSTRACT

The notion of climate change has been identified and described as one of the foremost pressing environmental challenges of the current century. A large portion of credible scientists have agreed that climate change threatens irreversible and dangerous consequences on the earth's ecosystem as a whole. The mitigation of these potential consequences and impacts demands immediate, significant, as well as sustained changes and actions. Given the importance of the above, it is promising that various human resource development (HRD) researchers have taken an eager interest and fascination in environmental issues as well as sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide the well-being of people is significantly threatened by the risks of climate change and the events of extreme weather has recently highlighted that the magnitude of these risks is uncomfortably high already (Holland & Young, 2020). Globally, climate change risks are well documented and promises of

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action have been made by no less than 190 countries that signed the 2015 Paris Agreement (Holland & Young, 2020). The aim of the Paris Agreement amongst other things was to strengthen the response to climate change threats by the global world in an effort to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development (Paris Agreement, 2015). Even though drastic and significant changes have been taking place in the field of human resource (HR) functions over the past years, compliance to the climate change policies has now become an integral part of human resource development (HRD) policies. Incorporating climate change policies in HRD policies for global businesses has become so crucial for the global economy.

Climate change is anthropogenic in nature and origin and must be considered as real. According to the United Nations (2019), climate change threatens irreversible and dangerous consequences on the earth-system as a whole. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fifth Assessment Report (IPCC AR5) (2014) asserted that the impacts are currently being felt and experienced effectively in the weakest human networks and ecosystems. Alleviating serious, unavoidable and irreversible impacts of climate change on individuals as well as ecosystems demands swift, significant and continued decreases in ozone depleting substance discharges (greenhouse gas discharges) (IPCC AR5, 2014). Given the importance of the above, it is promising that various HRD researchers such as Garavan and McGuire (2010), Scully-Russ (2012) and McGuire (2010) have taken an eager interest and fascination in environmental-related issues as well as sustainability. Therefore, in light of the above, the main aim of this chapter is exploring the role of HRD in communicating the risk of climate change and promoting pro-environmental behavioural changes at individual and organisational level.

CLIMATE CHANGE

It is a council of perfection that across the globe temperatures have become warmer and warmer over the years (Girvetz, Rosenstock & Nowak, 2019). Worldwide, the well-being of people is significantly threatened by the risks of climate change and the recent events of extreme weather have highlighted that the magnitude of these risks is uncomfortably high already (Holland & Young, 2020). Globally, climate change risks are well documented and promises of action have been made by no less than 190 countries that signed the 2015 Paris Agreement (Holland & Young, 2020). The Paris Agreement (COP21) is legally binding but voluntarily pledged (Clementon, 2016). The aim of the Paris Agreement amongst other things was to strengthen the response to the climate change threats by the global world in an effort to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development. The agreement had targets to pursue all efforts limiting the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees celcius and the long-term objective to ensure that by 2060 to 2080 there are zero-emissions in the world (Clemencon, 2016).

Initially the US had committed that by 2025 it would have reduced the greenhouse gas emission levels from 26% to 28% and from 2005 levels of which 80% of that gas emission reduction would have been energy related (Clemencon, 2016). China vowed that by 2030 it would have reduced its economic carbon intensity from 60% to 65% and from 2005 levels (Clementon, 2016). India committed a 33% to 35% reduction of its GDP emission intensity from 2005 levels by 2030 (Clemencon, 2016). Unfortunately, the Trump administration in 2020 pulled out of this historic agreement signed by former U.S. present Barack Obama in 2015, claiming that the agreement was forcing U.S. to curb carbon emissions, while placing few restrictions on China and India, therefore, the agreement was unfair (Bacon, 2020). Fortunately for the world, Joe Biden vowed to change that immediately if he wins the U.S. election, which he did in November 2020 (Bacon, 2020).

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