

THE LINKS BETWEEN TEAMWORK AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS TO INCREASE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE ORGANISATION

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Annotation

The article analyses teamwork and sustainable development as main factors of increasing competitiveness in long-term development of an organisation. It is being emphasized that the competence of human capital, civic responsibility, cooperation motivates organisations to comply with environmental, social and economic requirements of sustainable development. It has been noticed that one of the ways to understand the importance of competitive advantage is thinking about development as a social process which enables organisations to obtain experience of sustainable development, to apply it for problem-solving and creation of their own future. On the organisational level, applying the principles of teamwork, employees' intellectual knowledge is being transformed into competitive advantage of the organisation.

Key words: *teamwork, sustainable development, principles of sustainable development, competitiveness, sustainable organisation.*

Introduction

Radical changes of modern world are becoming an important factor determining the possibilities and perspectives of teamwork development. The perspectives of organisation's development will depend on how we are going to use the vast opportunities of organisation's management. Considering the fact that the organisation's environment is constantly changing which creates new requirements for its activity, it is obvious that the same is to be said about teamwork in the organisation. In order to overcome the challenges of today's business environment, more and more organisations change the old model systems with the new ones (when knowledge is not an invariable element and for its progress and development of application opportunities it is necessary to realise the process of sustainable development based on the culture of employees' mutual cooperation), when the main element of organisation's culture is teamwork. The integrated methods of teamwork and sustainable development do not aspire to be the only and the most successful management methods. However, the theme is relevant and interesting and worth investigating, whereas the principles of teamwork being developed in the context of sustainable development may help to achieve and sustain competitive advantage.

Research problem. Recently the implementation of teamwork and sustainable development principles is becoming one of the most popular and ambitious ideologies for business. Combining social, economic and environmental initiatives in the organisation is a complex process leading to a completely new business formulation. However, a sustainable organisation is not a spontaneous phenomenon. It is necessary to create appropriate conditions: to identify a management system within the organisation encouraging and supporting the initiative of sustainability. The importance of human capital, lifelong learning, cooperation, corporate spirit are the factors determining sustainable development of the organisation, but the attitude towards teamwork as a management system uniting all mentioned factors is not completely formulated. The factors of organisation's increasing competitiveness in the context of sustainable development and teamwork have not been analysed together in the theoretical works of researchers. The interrelation between the teamwork and sustainable development has also not been defined.

The object of the research – conceptual links between teamwork and sustainable development.

The aim of the research – to reveal the connection, links between teamwork and sustainable development seeking to increase the organization's competitiveness.

The objectives of the research:

1. To define the relevance of teamwork and sustainable development to the organisation's activity.

2. To provide links between the concepts of teamwork and sustainable development.

Research methods: the article is prepared using the methods of literature sources' analysis, logical analysis, abstraction, analogy and generalisation.

Research methodology

The rationale and procedures of research implementation. The research is based on the analysis of theoretical discourse. The teamwork and sustainable development are being analysed using the method of inductive reasoning as described by Lithuanian authors (Merkys, 1995; Kardelis, 2007; Žydžiūnaitė et al, 2010).

Research results

Teamwork – a means of competitive advantage of an organisation.

Today it is already not discussable that traditional workplace where it is being concentrated on inner competition and personalities, is undergoing a transformation. The management experts and researchers (Stewart, 2001; Hendrix, 2002; Žydžiūnaitė, 2005; Baker, Day, Salas, 2006; Dromantas, 2008; Altpeter, Luckhardt, Lewis 2007; Paige, Aaron, Yang, 2008; Seilius, Šimanskienė, 2009; Šalkauskienė, Vveinhardt, 2007, 2008; Šalkauskienė, 2011; Gražulis, 2014; Sukackaitė, Atkočiūnienė, 2016 and others) claim that a successful organisation is being characterised by effective teamwork and leadership and not a traditional management. The importance of *teamwork* has emerged in the changing philosophy of human resources management when *teamwork* has spread as a mechanism of performing, implementing tasks and goals, solving problems.

It is already not necessary to prove that teamwork is one of the methods inducing effectiveness in the organisation's activity. A team is not simply a sum of its members' abilities, intelligence and inner power. In order for a team to work, a special organisational culture based on teamwork philosophy that determines a smooth operation of the team, has to be in place.

Today's tense competition, rapid development and constant changes are the reality of most organizations. Therefore, a strong team of employees is useful for both – the organisation and employee himself / herself. It is obvious that the activity, performance of the team under the conditions of changes gains new features and a different shade. The main precondition of positive teamwork is the fact that the whole is better than the sum of separate parts that manifests as a cooperation, coordination, sincerity. A positive role of teamwork which determines a successful, favourable activity of the organisation is that in a fast-changing external environment where technologies, speed and flexibility are being valued, it combines individual work efforts which is a key to success, innovations and creativity (Smith, 2006). A successful activity of big organisations (where usually it is difficult to make rapid changes because of a complex management structure) is possible by creating teams aiming at a quick and effective response to changing environment and consumers' needs. According to M. Dromantas (2008), a positive teamwork encompasses four dimensions: potency (competence, construct of personal effectiveness); meaningfulness (understanding the meaningfulness of the team); autonomy (an extent to which members of the team experience and understand freedom and independence of their actions at work); influence (members of the team seek, share and understand feedback received from other members of the organisation). A common goal is a strong impetus for the team (Masiulis, Sudnickas, 2007). Authors summarized aspects positive teamwork: the scene is set to the rapid development of the organisation, it is enabled to create and provide more economic and better quality products; organisation is learning more effectively and retains what has been learnt; organisation saves time because the activity which would be performed by separate employees in turn (one after another) at the same time now is being performed by the whole team; team members may provide and implement more ideas conditioning the search for and implementation of innovations; employees working in a team may integrate and relate information in a way that an individual employee would not be able to implement by himself / herself. A lot of scientists define teamwork as an aggressive and safe path towards organisation's success. In addition to this, a synergy effect is being created because individual traits of separate employees complement each other. When a team is diverse and composed of different people then it is possible to use the strengths of separate team members.

In a contemporary organisation, a team is understood in the following way: not less than two people who rely on the same values, ideals, have the same attitudes in life and at work, voluntarily take responsibility for their work results, influence each other on the grounds of mutual trust and cooperation, pursue the goal, believe in the meaningful and useful activity, constantly search for new ways and methods to improve themselves and their common work (Šalkauskienė, 2011). Teamwork (being ready for a constant gain of new skills, continuous

learning from the experience of others, creativity, innovative thinking) is one of the most important development possibilities for a contemporary organisation. Namely teamwork could become a powerful leverage for effective activity in many organisations without more significant financial investments.

Analysing the development of organisation (and team at the same time), it is necessary to emphasize the concept of a sustainable team which is defined by the scientists as a set of components of personal behaviour style which are as follows: action (defines the activeness, achievements, search for solutions and development of the team), structure (organisation, methods, process, strategy, tactics and discipline), people (communication, motivation, empathy, social contact) and ideas (creativity, ideas). All of these factors are important for the organisation's change and its activity results. Thus, for the formulation of an effective team and achievement of good teamwork relations, effective work and feedback are necessary as well as constructive problem solving. It takes only one step to find a solution, but it is crucial.

Considering the tendencies of the change in organisation's activity and the pursuit of effectiveness it is important that the members of team would automatically perform activities, mechanically collect specialised knowledge, develop structural thinking and understanding. This implies that the competence of team members is an essential component of teamwork and a crucial assumption of this activity. An effective team feels the need to change, checks and updates its work methods and consults an expert upon the need.

The performed analysis of scientific works enables to claim that in order for an organisation to reach a higher level, the learning of the whole organisation has to be present and the pursuit of its higher culture which is influenced by many factors (management, leadership, decision making, change of roles, how the organisation's behavioural models interact with each other, non-formal structures, etc.) in the variety of which it is possible to find certain generality. To sum up the generalisations of some researchers, it is possible to distinguish the most relevant characteristics of teamwork: pursuing the goal, autonomy, empowerment, membership and group, leadership, effectiveness, cooperation, mutual help as well as the balance between homogeneity and versatility, timeliness, creativity, accuracy, thoroughness, intelligence, responsibility, sharing roles, competence, norms in the team, number of team members, structure, skills, traits of personality. According to R. Sukackaitė and Z. O. Atkočiūnienė (2016), the researches of modern leadership emphasizes the influence on the success of organization through team structures involving leadership, increasing empowerment of individuals and the allocation of leadership among members of an organization. All these factors and analysis of literature show that contemporary organisations are starting to change their attitude towards management. It is possible to pay attention to Japanese attitude which claims that the basis of long-term survival is to maximise the intellect and ingenuity of each person every day. Only if all employees' intellectual power is collected, organisation may expect to perform its activity successfully.

Sustainable development concept in the organisation's context

The theme of organisation's sustainability is very often discussed in the scientific literature and this term is used as a synonym of sustainable development or organisation's social responsibility – organisation's sustainability is based on economic, environmental and social responsibility aspects (Bagdonienė and others, 2009). It should be emphasized that contemporary business cannot ignore environmental and social problems (Šimanskienė, Petrulis, 2014). Since business is a part of these problems, it also has to become a part of their solution (Simanavičienė, Kovaliov, Šubonytė, 2011). For an organisation to become competitive in a dynamic business environment it has to be able to quickly and systematically adapt to changes. For its business to thrive, the organisation has to stick to new standards and implement them appropriately.

Many of Lithuanian and foreign authors, when examining the coherence of the organization, usually associate it with the implementation of the principles of sustainable development in the organization. (Gruževskis, Vasiljevienė, Moskvina, Kleinaitė, 2006; Meyer, 2007; Sbarcea, 2007; Čiegis, Grunda, 2007; Persson, 2008; Grundey, 2008; Juščius, 2009; McGehee and others, 2009; Lovins, 2009; Česynienė, Diskienė, Česynaitė, 2011; Bagdonienė, Paulavičienė, 2010; Simanavičienė, Kovaliov, Šubonytė, 2011; Česynienė, R., Diskienė, Česynaitė, 2011; Atkočiūnienė, Radiunaitė, 2011; Šimanskienė, Župerkienė, 2013; Raišienė and others 2014; Šimanskienė, Paužuolienė, 2010, 2011, 2015 and others).

A sustainable organisation is becoming one of the most popular and ambitious concepts because environment and organisation are closely related and its long-term success depends from the fact how it is able to integrate itself into the environment (Seivwright, A.N., Unsworth, K.L., 2016).

Sustainability in the organisation means more than implementation of one or another principle; it is the transformation of attitudes and behaviour. According to R. Čiegis (2007), the organisation has to understand that business and environment have to help each other and not to limit each other or interfere and that it is profitable to participate in sustainable development. Sustainability may be understood as a concept of responsible business which is creating a constant added value to the organisation. Only those organisations which list sustainability as their strategic goal, i.e. rethink their business models, products, technologies and processes, will eventually gain advantage (Nidumolu et al, 2009). A sustainable organisation – it is the sustainability through organisation's relations with the availability and use of resources creating a concept of responsible business (Šimanskienė and Paužolienė, 2011). The model of sustainable organisation emphasizes the following necessary conditions for developing the culture of sustainable organisation: to continue the organisation's history, i.e. to keep and improve the idea and vision of the founders, to create main values and norms; to create the feeling of integrity; the greater the number of members of organisation who identify themselves with organisation's values, standards and stick to them, the stronger is the feeling of the unity and identity of its members; to encourage to participate in organisation's activity. A lot of authors point out that employees' participation in sharing ideas and decision-making is very important since it is a necessary condition for team compatibility. Upon the interaction among organisation members, new ideas are being initiated and encouraged – consequently this induces innovative processes. It has been noticed that teamwork includes the same aspects. Sharing knowledge is at the same time a goal, impetus, because the main aim of the team is to encourage people to communicate. Since sustainable development is not a part of organisation's management system, thus the management system which integrates the elements of sustainable development into all levels of organisation and processes is necessary. In order for the organisation to become a sustainable business, the ideas of sustainable development have to become a part of organisation's culture and include each and every – not only employees and clients, but also suppliers, partners and investors. The creation of sustainable business model requires to implement a completely new attitude, thinking, but the benefit might be worth the efforts (Rader and McKenzie Peterson, 2009).

Recently the strategies of organisations are changing – from defensive to offensive when trying to achieve the balance between economic, social and environmental initiatives. The offensive strategy of a sustainable organisation encompasses communication and cooperation throughout the supply chain and this enables to better adjust to systemic changes in the organisation; it also includes a goal to move towards optimal perfection in the context of sustainable organisation through management and leadership, through sharing necessary and timely information and knowledge; implementing sustainability as a goal in organisation's culture which has a lot of importance not only for employees, but also clients, shareholders; tries to reduce expenses with ecological productivity and sustainable innovations. This strategy makes a greater impact on consumers, develops a sustainable interaction between shareholders and suppliers and optimises competitive advantage with the help of ideas, creativity and innovations.

Effectively operating team has an impact on organisation and its members' ability to adapt to changing situations, create a clear cooperation network. The essential aim of organisation's management is to turn employees' intellectual knowledge into a sustainable competitive advantage. Good leaders who have long-term vision and clearly defined sustainable goals, who include and motivate all members of the organisation to reach for the defined goals are very important not only for making the organisation effective but also to implement ideas of sustainable development. The individual commitment of each member of the organisation for its culture and sustainability is compulsory because only motivated employees who are willing to share the experience possessed and supporting initiatives of sustainable development are leading organisation towards positive changes. By nature people are against changes, therefore, it is necessary to embed knowledge culture in the organisation with not only effective lifelong learning of employees but also wish and need to gain new knowledge, share it and develop competences that are present.

According to scientists, organisation when seeking that its members would become involved into economic, social and environmental sustainability initiatives has not only encourage clear cooperation, transparent communication, following good examples of leaders and managers, but also to support creativity and innovations. The innovative activity of organisation is one of the essential factors for sustainable development. Teams based on innovations – it is generation, development, interchange and application of new ideas for marketable products and goods, business success and at the same time for economic vitality and the progress of society. Organisation by constantly creating new and better services, products and processes, and creatively breaking the rules of competitive games and by finding new ways to compete, can completely differently define its business significance and push even the biggest competitors. The sustainability integrated into organisation's aims encourages creativity, innovations, competitive advantage, reduces expenses, includes and motivates both employees and clients. The commitment of organisation's members to seek for sustainable development aims and their understanding has to be embedded in all factors of sustainable development so that sustainable economic, social and environmental initiatives would become a part of organisational culture. To sum it up, it is possible to distinguish the following factors of sustainable organisation: human resources, management and leadership, culture, technologies, processes and infrastructure.

Changes in global environment inevitably determine sustainability and responsibility, therefore, management concepts change and overlap, complement each other with the problems analysed (Bagdonienė, Paulavičienė, 2010). In recent years, it can be noticed that the attention to teamwork and sustainability concepts is increasing. It is obvious that the role of teamwork in the implementation of ideas of sustainable development is undisputed and it may become as an advantage contributing to organisation's development.

Conclusions

The results of research enabled to achieve the set aims and formulate the following main aspects:

- Nowadays, if an organisation wants to become a competitive one and to implement the harmony between economic, social and environmental aims has to understand that it is only possible by effectively managing the knowledge of human capital (teamwork) and the following factors of sustainable development in the organisation – management and leadership, culture, intellectual capital, processes, technologies and infrastructure. The most effective means is the improvement, development of organisation's teamwork and reaching for the highest levels of maturity. Teamwork not only conditions the possibilities for the organisation to create a competitive advantage, but also to gain new competences corresponding to the economic changes.

- Summarizing the ideas of many authors it is possible to claim that the concept of sustainable development cannot be separated from the concept of teamwork, because the concept of sustainability itself implies the ability of the organisation to adapt to changes of organisation's environment, apply best practices and achieve as well as sustain competitive advantage. The importance of teamwork when initiating changes within the organisation is innovative as well as flexible thinking, creativity, effective information management, ability to communicate and manage conflicts, creating conditions for constant improvement, achieving goals, ability to take responsibility and trust each other.

- By combining the factors of teamwork (management, leadership, decision-making, role change, coherence of organisation's behavioural models, etc.) and sustainable organisation (management and leadership, culture and intellectual capital, etc.) it is clear that the role of teamwork while implementing the ideas of sustainable development within the organisation is obvious. However, the practice of sustainable activity also benefits organisation – it might be as a competitive advantage hiring and keeping employees, attracting investors.

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