

## **Sustainability Mindset for Accelerating the Pace of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Mindset has multifarious connotations at present, but it was developed by Carol Dweck<sup>1</sup> by contrasting different beliefs about where our abilities came from. The concept got popularised with publication of her book on Mindset in 2006. Sustainability mindset has been defined as “a way of thinking and being that results from a broad understanding of the ecosystem from social sensitivity, an introspective focus on our personal values and higher self and finds its expression in actions for the greater good of the whole”<sup>2</sup>. Sustainability mindset has been garnering attention of academia and industry in recent years due to growing concern about ecological and societal dimensions, as the purpose of business has undergone change over time from common wealth (self-interest & rational self-interest) of Adam Smith<sup>3</sup> to shareholder interest (Alfred<sup>4</sup>, 1999) and further to stakeholder interest (Freeman<sup>5</sup>, 1984). Also, focus has shifted to business practices concerned with environmental degradation, climate change and alternative energy.

Sustainability, with multiple perspectives, has a long history but it acquired centre stage in 1983 when United Nations created the Brundtland Commission<sup>6</sup> to unite countries in pursuit of sustainable development. It defined development as sustainable “if it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs”. The Brundtland Commission published a report in 1987 ‘Our Common Future’<sup>7</sup> which highlighted that human resource development in the form of poverty reduction, gender equity, and wealth redistribution was imperative to developing strategies for environmental conservation, and that environmental limits to economic growth in industrialized and industrializing societies. A number of developments have taken place during the past two decades or so. Elkington<sup>8</sup> (1994) introduced the concept of triple bottom line, referred to as 3Ps- people, profit and planet.

At a UN summit in 2000 eight measurable goals, called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were signed by leaders of 189 countries to be achieved by 2015. Substantial progress was reported regarding the MDGs by the target date. In 2015 UN General Assembly Open Working Group (OWG) proposed a document containing 17 goals to be placed for the approval of General Assembly. This document formed the basis for 17 SDGs as the global development agenda to be pursued during 2015-2030 (<https://www.sdgfund.org/mdgs-sdgs>). Hence concerted efforts are being made to work towards these. The recent trends around sustainability are: reduction in energy consumption, microgrids for secure and reliable power supply, green grids for green energy, sustainability reporting, plant-based diets, water conservation and net-zero initiatives. Companies are manufacturing electric cars and two-wheelers and making climate commitments and commitment to carbon zero initiatives.

Industry alone cannot achieve the SDGs, academia which provides human capital to industry needs to be a partner in this endeavour. Management education has been under scathing attack from various quarters

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for its focus on knowledge on skills for maximising profits which were leading to unhealthy competition and ethical issues. Mintzberg<sup>9</sup> (2004) in his book *Managers Not MBAs* has been critical of the thrust in management education and Sumantra Ghoshal<sup>10</sup> (2005) raised questions regarding management theories as the basis of management education. In the above scenario responsibility and sustainability need to be the dominant paradigm in management education which can be built on Principles of Responsible Management (PRME). The question is of operationalisation of PRME principles in management education for sustainability mindset. Sharma<sup>11,12,13</sup> (2017, 2021a, b,c) has developed a competency model, CAMB integrating PRME principles which is being used across geographies for developing sustainability mindset for sustainable development<sup>14</sup>. As business schools prepare human capital for industry, they are best positioned to inculcate sustainability mindset leveraging technology and innovations.

Hope the special issue on 'Sustainability Mindset for Accelerating the Pace of SDGs' will stimulate thought and generate action for stepping up movement towards sustainable development.

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