

**The Mechanisms of Activating the Role of Human  
Resources in Achieving Sustainable Development  
in Accordance with Saudi Vision 2030 in  
University Sector**

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## Abstract

This paper aims at exploring the role of human resources in achieving sustainable development in university sector in Saudi Arabia in Accordance with Saudi Vision 2030. The descriptive research design was used through a questionnaire designed for study purposes in order to collect preliminary information from the sample of the study, which consisted of 30 specialists in the field of human resources and sustainable development as well as 20 deans of faculties of business administration in Saudi universities. Then, questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS. The results illustrated that human resources played a large role in access to health services and education, reducing poverty and unemployment, and preserving and protecting the environment. This paper is expected to be a reference for other parties in other sectors to address what human resources development mechanisms need to be improved and continued.

**Keywords:** *Human Resources, Sustainable Development, Saudi Vision 2030.*

## 1. Introduction

Humanity today stands at a crossroads and must choose the right path to ensure a decent life for the present and future generations. This road is defined as sustainable development that encompasses all aspects, whether environmental, social, economic, or even cultural and intellectual. Attention to human resources is essential in any development process from which societies are based (Bombiak & Marciniuk - Kluska, 2018). The causal relationship between human resource development and multi-faceted development can be emphasized as a first stage

of achieving sustainable development, which represents a path in which various economic, social and environmental efforts interact, as sustainable development is based on the rational exploitation of resources with a view to establishing a modern society and transition from underdevelopment and stagnation to a state of progress(Kolk & Van Tulder, 2010).Adapting to the changes and rapid developments in the various economic, social and informational fields necessitates real response to the various requirements of these changes and developments through different mechanisms to upgrade institutions and achieve their objectives at the near and long term (Imaz & Sheinbaum, 2017).

Saudi vision 2030 represents a qualitative leap in the Kingdom's policy towards dealing with the fundamentals of the economy and society, which are designed towards sustainable development (Alshuaibi, 2017). Saudi Vision 2030 confirmed the importance of industrialization aimed at diversifying sources of income, increasing the contribution of the private sector to economic activity, creating new job opportunities, developing the national workforce, and establishing a solid and modern technical base (Gazette, 2016).Moreover, Saudi Vision 2030 aims to provide a friendly environment to industrial investment, with all possibilities, as well as many measures and a lot of legislation to promote the Saudi industry to compete locally and globally (Khan, 2016). Thus, Saudi Vision 2030 is a historic shift in the Saudi economy, ending decades of dependence on crude oil and beginning a confident and fast pace towards a better future based on diversification and attracting international investment (Josephsen, 2017).

## **2. Literature Review**

Sustainable development is a process aimed at harnessing all potentials and capacities in all economic, social and political fields in the service of local development, which allow to meet the needs and requirements of present generations without prejudice to the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Venkatesh et al., 2014). According to Strezov et al. (2017), sustainable development is based mainly on three main dimensions, namely economic, social, and environmental. To implement any sustainable development, the economic, environmental and social dimensions must be linked. Sustainable social development means justice in distribution, delivery of social services such as health and education, achieving gender equality, political accountability and popular participation of all segments of society in the decision-making process (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). While, sustainable economic development is a system that enables the continuous production of goods and services, which maintains a manageable level of economic balance between public output and debt, and prevents social imbalances resulting from economic policies (Barbier & Burgess, 2017). Finally, sustainable environmental development must maintain a stable base of natural resources and avoid excessive depletion of renewable resources, including soil productivity, atmospheric equilibrium and natural ecosystems that are not normally classified as economic resources (Selim et al., 2018).

There are many studies that dealt with human resources and sustainable development. Human development is the main pillar of sustainable development, it must have been given sufficient importance and priority, through the constant pursuit of poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, the

search for justice and equality between the rich and the poor, widening gap between the developed and developing worlds, and trying to take advantage of the benefits of globalization as much as possible while reducing their negative effects at the same time (Venkatesh et al., 2014). In addition, Martínez - Garcia et al. (2018) illustrated that the role of human resources summarized in focusing on achieving equity, activating the distributed health services, achieving a kind of harmony between the outputs of the educational system and the output of higher education with the labor market, and improving purchasing power, thus improving the standard of living of citizens. Also, Ricardo de Souza Freitas et al. (2011) explained that sustainable development seeks full use of human resources by working to improve education and health services and fight hunger as much as possible, but what is important is the access of basic services to all segments of society.

A review of the successful experiences of some countries in the development of human resources cannot provide a good idea of the mechanism that can be followed to develop human resources in Saudi Arabia, and this is due to the different environments geographically, socially, culturally and intellectually (Alshuwaikhat & Mohammed, 2017). However, there are some programs and mechanisms that can be followed, for instance, Bombiak & Marciniuk-Kluska (2018) stressed the importance of diversifying and renewing the means of developing human resources and opening channels between them, taking into consideration social diversity and education by reducing the disparity between male and female opportunities. Moreover, Venkatesh et al. (2014) focused attention on the need to harmonize the development of manpower with the market

economy through the development of education, training and investment programs.

In conclusion, attention to human resources is the basis for sustainable development, since human development must ensure social peace, environmental protection, sustained growth for future generations, and real democracy and human rights (Barbier& Burgess, 2017). The adoption of sustainable development by universities is not theoretically confined to signing agreements, but it is a daily practice of effective operations that show results in their activities and characteristics of their environmental, economic and social effects (Albareda-Tiana et al., 2018).

### **3. Research Problems and Questions**

This paper aims at investigating the role of human resources in achieving sustainable development in university sector in Saudi Arabia in Accordance with Saudi Vision 2030. In terms of human development, the achievements of the Arab countries during the last decade were less than the global average. Despite the low rate of poverty in Saudi Arabia compared with other parts of the world, Saudi Arabia is still clogged with other shackles of poverty such as capabilities and opportunity, which results from three shortcomings including lack of freedom, empowerment of women, and knowledge fields, since its existence would not put Saudi Arabia on the road to sustainable development (Alshuwaikhat& Mohammed, 2017). Sustainable development is ringing the alarm bell, warning that many natural resources, living organisms and development activities will not continue if the spending and consumption rates of these energies and resources remain the same (Jerome, 2013). But there are natural disasters and economic and social crises that will be exposed to human beings on this

planet if direct intervention does not take place by employing advanced knowledge and technology to stop this situation in order to ensure equal opportunities for all and preserve the ecological, geographical and economic balance between human and nature (Crespo et al., 2017). A delay in achieving sustainable development are among the most important difficulties facing countries and governments (Soliman, 2018; Le Blanc, 2015). With the development of the concept of human resources and possession of a very important place in modern studies and its link to the sustainable development sought by all countries of the world, the researcher raises the following main question: *What is the role of human resources in achieving sustainable development in university sector in Saudi Arabia?*

From the main question, the researcher will answer the following sub-questions:

1. What is the role of human resources in access to health services and education?
2. What is the role of human resources in reducing poverty and unemployment?
3. What is the role of human resources in preserving and protecting the environment?

#### **4. Research Methodology**

In order to answer research questions, descriptive research design was adopted in this research. The research used the descriptive approach because the human resource is a descriptive element since it identifies the basic aspects of human resources mechanisms and how to activate them in universities in order to achieve sustainable development. The descriptive approach aims at obtaining accurate information, as questionnaire will be adopted as a tool to gather information from the sample, which consisted of 30



specialists in the field of human resources and sustainable development as well as 20 deans of faculties of business administration in Saudi universities. Questionnaire included of open and closed questions. Then, the researcher used the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data collected.

#### **4.1 Validity and Reliability**

Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated to measure the questionnaire variables and verify their validity, which means the strength of the correlation between the measurement paragraphs. In addition, the Alpha coefficient is given with a good estimate of reliability. In this research, the Cronbach alpha equation was applied to verify the reliability of the questionnaire. Although there are no standards for the appropriate alpha values, in practice, alpha that is greater than 60.0 is considered acceptable. The table 1 shows the Cronbach's alpha values for the study variables, where health and education services variable obtained the highest value, which reached 0.842, while poverty and unemployment variable obtained the lowest value, which reached 0.803. The questionnaire as a whole obtained a value of 0.898, which reflects the consistency of all the paragraphs of the questionnaire.

**Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha for the Questionnaire.**

Scale	Item number	Cronbach's Alpha (%)
Health and Education Services	8	0.842
Poverty and Unemployment	8	0.803
The Protection and Preservation of the Environment	8	0.829
Entire Questionnaire	24	0.898

## 4.2 Descriptive Statistics

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis of the questionnaire statements are presented by determining the mean and standard deviations. Therefore, the degree of response or non-response of sample to the statements is determined, including health and education services, poverty and unemployment, and the protection and preservation of the environment.

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviations of Health and Education Services.**

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Human resources contribute towards the attainment of the highest possible level of health.	4.24	.744
2. Human resources support the implementation of policies that strength health workforce capacity.	4.05	.867
3. Human resources develop the implementation of strategies that aim to increase the quality of education services and training.	4.18	.896
4. Human resources improving the delivery of safe health care services.	4.06	1.219
5. Human resources seeks to achieve better outcomes from educational process.	4.06	.843
6. Human resources consider cultural and geographical factors when examining health care systems.	4.10	.909
7. Human resources make achieving educational goals and national development.	4.24	.822
8. Human resources provide an adequate, skilled and well-motivated competencies to develop health and education services.	4.32	.844
Total Mean and Standard Deviation	4.16	.622

The table 2 shows that health and education services dimension obtained a mean estimated at (4.16) with a standard deviation of (0.622), in general, statements tend to an excellent degree. As statement 8, which states “Human resources provide an adequate, skilled and well-motivated competencies to develop health and education services”, has obtained the highest mean, while statement 2, which states “Human resources support the implementation of policies that strength health workforce capacity” has obtained the lowest mean.

**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviations of Poverty and Unemployment.**

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Human resources seek to reduce unemployment in Saudi society.	4.46	.838
2. Human resources enhance their workforces' skills to respond to the emerging demands of society.	4.18	.825
3. Human resources contribute to the adoption of development programs based on self-reliance and self-sufficiency.	4.28	.858
4. Human resources strategies support investment at the level of firms and industries, which create a new jobs.	4.16	1.017
5. Human resources focus on women's empowerment and employment in order to reduce poverty.	4.08	.944
6. Human resources must shift toward gender equality in education to resolve the youth unemployment crisis.	4.02	1.000
7. Human resources encourage free market policies to promote sustained economic growth.	4.20	.904
8. Human resources should spend more on education and training, which enable higher skilled workforce.	3.98	1.097
Total Mean and Standard Deviation	4.17	.610

The table 3 shows that poverty and unemployment dimension obtained a mean estimated at (4.17) with a standard deviation of (0.610), in general, statements tend to an excellent degree. As statement 1, which states “Human resources seek to reduce unemployment in Saudi society”, has obtained the highest mean, while statement 8, which states “Human resources should spend more on education and training, which enable higher skilled workforce” has obtained the lowest mean.

**Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviations of the Protection and Preservation of the Environment.**

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Human resources take into account the needs of environmental issues.	4.22	.975
2. Human resources provide environmental training in order to increase awareness.	3.98	.915
3. Human resources provide opportunity to participate in green schemes and joint for environmental issues problem solving.	3.90	1.015
4. Human resources contribute to the design and development of the perfect environmentally friendly products.	3.96	.989
5. Human resources support the use of renewable energy and sustainable fuels.	3.98	.892
6. Human resources contribute to reducing the emission of toxic chemicals in air and water.	4.12	.918
7. Human resources contribute to the minimization of electricity consumption cost.	4.32	.713
8. Human resources support access to clean water and sanitation.	4.56	.705
Total Mean and Standard Deviation	4.13	.606

The table 4 shows that the protection and preservation of the environment dimension obtained a mean estimated at (4.13) with a standard deviation of (0.606), in general, statements tend to an excellent degree. As statement 8, which states “Human resources support access to clean water and sanitation”, has obtained the highest mean, while statement 3, which states “Human resources provide opportunity to participate in green schemes and joint for environmental issues problem solving” has obtained the lowest mean.

### 4.3 Research Questions

In order to answer research questions, One-Sample T-Test was used to explore the role of human resources in achieving sustainable development.

***The First Question: What is the role of human resources in access to health services and education?***

**Table 5: Health and Education Services.**

One sample T- Test						
	Test Value = 0.05					
	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	upper
Health and Education services	47.239	49	.000	4.15250	3.9758	4.3292

It is clear from the Table 4.5 that Sig. value is 0.000 that is less than 0.05, which means that human resource has a large role in access to health services and education. The results of this study are consistent with Alshuwaikhat& Mohammed (2017); Bombiak & Marciniuk-Kluska (2018).

***The Second Question: What is the role of human resources in reducing poverty and unemployment?***

**Table 6: Poverty and Unemployment.**

One sample T- Test						
	Test Value = 0.05					
	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
Poverty and Unemployment	48.309	49	.000	4.16500	3.9917	4.3383

It is clear from the Table 6 that Sig. value is 0.000 that is less than 0.05, which means that human resource has a large role in reducing poverty and unemployment. The results of this study are consistent with Venkatesh et al. (2014); Strezov et al. (2017).

*The Third Question: What is the role of human resources in preserving and protecting the environment?*

**Table 7: The Protection and Preservation of the Environment.**

One sample T- Test						
	Test Value = 0.05					
	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
The Protection and Preservation of the Environment	48.169	49	.000	4.12500	3.9529	4.2971

It is clear from the Table 7 Sig. value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, which means that human resource has a large role in preserving and protecting the environment. The

results of this study are consistent with Barbier & Burgess (2017); Selim et al. (2018).

#### **4.4 Open Questions**

As mentioned in above, open questionnaire consists of four questions that are directly related to research objectives. Open questions and answers are summarized as follows:

**1. In your opinion, what are the mechanisms to activate the role of human resources in achieving sustainable development in university sector?**

Undoubtedly, there is an urgent need to activate the role of human resources in university sector in order to achieve sustainable development. As investing, developing, and promoting in human resources by improving their skills and increasing their professional competence has become a fundamental requirement. This endorsed with what said by:

***"I think that priority should be given to investing in human capabilities and skills through the adoption of appropriate mechanisms in order to achieve long-term sustainable development."***

Moreover, human resources should play a pivotal role in refining skills and mobilizing capacities, and developing human competencies in scientific, professional and technical aspects, which are necessary to meet the requirements of development and labour market needs, as one respondent was explained:

***"Its role is activated by achieving a kind of harmony between the outputs of the educational system and the outputs of higher education with the labour market;"***

***improving purchasing power, and thus improving the standard of living of citizens."***

Another respondent mentioned:

***"Activating strategies aimed at reducing unemployment and poverty in order to provide the basic needs of the population and ensure continuity for future generations, including: food, housing, education and health, fighting unemployment and poverty, etc."***

There should be a change in the curriculum and makes educational reforms, and human resources should intensify its courses and workshops in order to maximize the benefits and engage students in Saudi society, thus promoting sustainable development, as one respondent was described:

***"This is done by creating workshops that seek to exploit the use of resources and reduce their degradation and the resulting pollution, throughout the entire life cycle."***

Another respondent confirmed that as she said:

***"Through adopt a number of educational reforms that emphasize the role of human resources in the sustainable development of the energy sector."***

2. In your opinion, what human resources should do to improve access to health services and education, which corresponds to Saudi Vision 2030?

Health and education is a basic requirement, so every country in the world should make sure to provide it to its citizens, hence, the role of human resources management is highlighted in facilitating access to health and education services, as one respondent was explained:



***"I think that human resources should ensure adequate funding of the Children's Health Insurance Program and implement expansion in more cities."***

One of the most important duties of human resources is to improve the quality of service provided by enhancing all the requirements for success, which include qualified personnel and equipment. Some of these were illustrated by one respondent:

***"There is a need for human resource department to improving overall patient health outcomes and delivery of health care services and increasing efficiency of the existing workforce and reducing insurance burdens."***

Human resources should contribute to the development of comprehensive health care programs to maintain the health and safety of students in universities, as one respondent was explained:

***"This is due to the change in the structure of health care system".***

***3. In your opinion, what human resources should do to reduce poverty and unemployment, which corresponds to Saudi Vision 2030?***

The economic dimension aims at achieving a high level of human well-being by increasing its share of the necessary goods and services, however, this cannot be achieved in light of the limited resources available to many countries, whether advanced or backward. The economic dimension also aims to provide the main elements of production, foremost of which is regulation, scientific knowledge and capital as well as to increase growth rates in different areas of production to increase per capita income

rates and stimulate relationship and feedback between inputs and outputs, as one respondent was explained:

***"I believe that university outputs are primarily responsible for reducing unemployment in the Kingdom, so I think this happens by paying attention to the practical side and the courses at the expense of the theoretical side by guiding students to the required disciplines and stay away from saturated disciplines."***

From this perspective, the role of HRM in this area begins with the need to apply and ensure the objective and good conduct of the selection of available human resources according to the recruitment criteria. In other words, it is necessary to rely on the balance between qualities and skills of candidate and the demands of open positions jobs available. Women must also enter the labour market and engage men in responsibilities, and here lies the role of human resources in promoting that. This was illustrated by one respondent:

***"In my own opinion, there are a number of ways that human resources need to do, this includes fair employment systems that ensure equality among members of society, so that no one penetrates the other. It is necessary to support women and encourage them in entering into labour market to fight poverty."***

***4. In your opinion, what human resources should do to protect and preserve environment, which corresponds to Saudi Vision 2030?***

The role of universities in Arab countries towards environmental awareness remains very poor as well as there is no role for human resources to adopt effective strategies

towards the environment such as the establishment of activities or instructing students to avoid the bad behaviours of wasting water or the use of electricity inappropriately and cutting trees and roses inside and outside the university, as this may contribute to the preparation of good students to increase their environmental awareness and development as human tools active in the future. Respondents have made several suggestions to activate the role of human resources in environmental preservation and protection. For instance, one respondent mentioned:

***"I believe that human resources must provide opportunity to activate green schemes, as it should focus on minimizing electricity consumption and taking advantage of solar and wind energy."***

Some respondents stressed the importance of relying on alternative sources, not just oil, which contributes to diversifying sources of income and preserves the environment alike, as one respondent was described:

***"Human resources must encourage to fully promote the use of renewable energy and sustainable fuels. So it is necessary to take into account the ideas and principles underlying the Kingdom's vision 2030, the most important of which was to reduce dependence on oil and find alternative sources"***.

## **5. Conclusion**

This paper aimed at investigating the role of human resources in achieving sustainable development in university sector in Saudi Arabia in Accordance with Saudi Vision 2030. Through results of the statistical analysis of the study sample, which numbered 30 specialists in the field of human

resources and sustainable development as well as 20 deans of faculties of business administration in Saudi universities, human resources played a large role in access to health services and education, reducing poverty and unemployment, and preserving and protecting the environment. The outcomes of this research will help to take a first look at a variety of indicators that contribute to detect unanticipated or underdeveloped targets. This paper is expected to be a reference for other parties in other sectors to address what mechanisms need to be improved and continued.

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