

Job sustainability

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Framing the agenda for appraising job sustainability: A multiple stakeholder perspective

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Abstract

The sustainability imperative is requiring organisations to engage more constructively with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. Linked with the constant pressure on government, business and entrepreneurs to create and sustain more jobs, the human resource imperative can clearly not be excluded from the journey towards more sustainable economies, especially in developing economies like South Africa. These imperatives are resulting in a shift within the Human Resource Management (HRM) field away from strategic HRM to a sustainable HRM approach, which is located in a multiple stakeholder perspective. In the South African context and from a sustainable HRM perspective, this paper examines how an organisation could conceptualise and appraise the sustainability of a job. In doing so, the concept of a sustainable job is constructed from a multi-disciplinary perspective by examining the primary interests of a wide range of organisational stakeholders. In particular, the paper explores the concept from the perspective of the employee, the trade union, the manager/owner/shareholder, the organisation, government, and society at large. It also gives a voice to the natural environment. It is proposed that this multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary perspective of the concept of a sustainable job provides the agenda for stakeholder engagement by HRM on this topic, but that further research is needed to test and refine this framework.

Key words

Decent jobs, Job creation, South Africa, Stakeholder engagement, Sustainable Human Resource Management, Sustainable jobs

INTRODUCTION

With the multitude of definitions surrounding sustainable development or sustainability, organisations sometimes find themselves confused with this concept's meaning and especially its implementation. However, these various definitions often have the same underlying principles to align them – and for local, South African purposes, are captured in the National Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Development (DEA, 2012). These principles include (1) the need for long term planning, (2) a responsible development path that leaves future generations with the same or improved opportunities, (3) the promotion of coordination and cooperation within and across sectors, and (4) the cultivating of partnerships between a variety of stakeholders. These same principles can apply to an organisation wanting (or needing) to engage in sustainability and become a sustainable organisation.

The sustainability challenge is increasingly receiving local and international attention, and although many organisations still treat this aspect in a reactive approach, there are interesting lessons learnt in organisations that have embraced this challenge and used it to improve their business (e.g. Corporate Knights, 2012). For several years now, there has been a growing trend to include and integrate sustainability into core HRM matters, especially in response to the increasing focus on the social aspects related to sustainability's triple bottom-line. These impacts on HRM are evident in health and safety, HR development, employability, recruitment and retention of quality employees, inculcating lifelong learning, promoting work-life balance, promoting ethical behaviour, coping with an aging workforces, and so forth (e.g. WBCSD 2002, 2005, 2006 in Ehnert, 2009).

The sustainability imperative is requiring organisations to engage more constructively with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. Freeman's (1984) seminal work on stakeholder theory identifies stakeholders as a range of individuals or groups that are located both within and outside of the organisation, and that are affected by, and/or can affect the organisation's attempts to achieve its purpose.

A normative view of stakeholder theory makes the assumption that the interests of all stakeholders are of intrinsic value (Donaldson and Preston, 1995) and therefore need to - at a minimum - be acknowledged by the organisation. The challenge of course, is to deal constructively and effectively with the multiple and often competing interests of the various stakeholders. When it comes to engaging stakeholders who have competing interests, Mitchell et al. (1997) argue that not all stakeholders are created equal, differing for example, in their power, legitimacy and urgency. How this weighing up of stakeholder interests applies to the issue of job sustainability, is not straightforward. This paper attempts to identify the primary interests and perspective of various stakeholders as they relate to the issue of creating, developing and maintaining sustainable jobs.

THE JOBS IMPERATIVE

In the light of the faltering economic recovery subsequent to the global economic crisis of 2008/9, the creation of jobs has emerged as a top priority for many governments around the world. With official unemployment rates in South Africa at around 25% (Statistics South Africa, 2012) and youth unemployment around 50% (National Planning Commission, 2010), job creation is a critical concern. Not surprisingly then, Strategic Priority 1 of the government's Medium Term Strategic Framework for 2009-2014 is "Speeding up growth and transforming the economy to create decent work and sustainable livelihoods" (The Presidency, 2010).

In turn, business is expected to contribute to job creation, particularly through small businesses growth, as research has identified the SMME sector has the most effective sector when it comes to creating jobs (Neumark et al., 2011; Engineering News, 2012). When reviewing recent developments, challenges and opportunities around job creation, and the "people side" of responsible and sustainable organisations, it is encouraging to see calls for the human and social capital dimensions of jobs to be acknowledged and enhanced, making it especially apt for businesses, not only from a compliance perspective (where mandatory) but also a competitive and reputational advantage, if proactively addressed.

The potential in green jobs

Various benefits emerge when comparing the so-called ‘brown economy’ with the ideas and ideals around the increasingly popular ‘green economy’. South Africa’s view on a green economy was the centre of discussion at its inaugural Green Economy Summit, held in 2010. It was then defined as “a sustainable development path based on addressing the interdependence between economic growth, social protection and natural ecosystem”, with its more formal definition viewed as a “system of economic activities related to the production distribution and consumption of goods and services that result in improved human well-being over the long term, while not exposing future generations to significant environmental risks or ecological scarcities” (Department of Economic Development et al. South Africa, 2011). In contrast, the ‘brown economy’ signifies an “economic growth model which is based on extensive use of materials, energy and resources, including the use of hazardous and other problematic substances that have a negative impact on the environment and on human beings. The environmental and health costs (or costs of avoided damage) are not taken into account in the brown economy. The latter also has a very short-term focus on maximizing private profit, often unsustainable and at a high cost to the general public” (UN, 2010).

A key aspect of this economic debate relates to the energy efficiency and effectiveness approaches being adopted by organisations and governments across the globe promoting a low carbon economy, which is often viewed as a cornerstone of a sustainable, green economy. Specifically of relevance to HRM, is the potential of low-carbon economy initiatives to contribute to job creation. For instance, in the European Union, Da Graça Carvalho et al. (2011) reviewed various studies to conclude that the creation of millions of new jobs and increased international investment was possible in a post-carbon society (meaning the inclusion of smart grids, improved energy storage and increased development in renewable energy).

In South Africa, a similar message is being sent. In the government’s strategy “New Growth Path” (Economic Development, 2010), it identifies ten ‘job drivers’ of which the green economy is one. In a comprehensive study by Maia et al. (2010) – one of the first of its kind in South Africa – job creation

potentials were assessed for various sectors in the short, medium and long term. In total, the authors estimate the development of a South African green economy could lead to an estimated 98,000 new direct jobs in the short term, growing to 255,000 in the medium term and ultimately 462,000 formal economic employment opportunities further down the road. This begins to make a compelling business case for sustainability as a key driver in employment, in the creation, development, evolution and continuation of jobs, or employment opportunities.

MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES OF SUSTAINABLE JOBS

Linked with the constant pressure on government, business and entrepreneurs to create and sustain more jobs, the human resource imperative can clearly not be excluded from the journey towards more sustainable economies. This and other contextual imperatives are resulting in a shift within the Human Resource Management (HRM) field. This shift is away from strategic HRM which is located predominantly in a shareholder mindset, in preference for a sustainable HRM approach (Becker, 2011; Colbert and Kurucz, 2007; Harmon et al., 2010; Twomey et al., 2010; Wirtenber et al., 2007), which is located in a multiple stakeholder perspective.

According to Freitas et al. (2011), sustainable HRM aims to improve performance through innovation, diversity management and environmental management to support the strategy of the business and simultaneously strive for a balance between economic prosperity, social equity and environmental integrity. In the South African context and from a sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective, this paper examines how an organisation should conceptualise and appraise the sustainability of a job. In doing so, the concept of a sustainable job is constructed from a multi-disciplinary perspective and examines the *primary* interests of a wide range of organisational stakeholders. At the risk of oversimplification, identifying only the primary interests of particular stakeholders helps, somewhat paradoxically, to highlight the complexity of a multi-disciplinary and multiple stakeholder perspective, as it emphasises the primary interests upon which stakeholders are competing. In reality, stakeholders

would have a wider range of interests, and many of these interests may be closer to the position of some of the other stakeholders. In particular, the paper explores the concept of a sustainable job from the perspective of the manager/owner/shareholder, the employee, the trade union, the organisation, government, society at large, and the natural environment. A second area of simplification in this paper is its focus on a single job as its frame of reference. Clearly, the concerns and interests of organisation stakeholders about a single job, intersect with their concerns and interests in other individual jobs, groupings or families of jobs, and other elements of organisational design. These issues are beyond the scope of this paper.

The Manager/owner/shareholder perspective

The shareholder perspective has been the dominant perspective when viewing jobs in organisations, where economic concerns are most compelling. Drawing from economics, the shareholder perspective is concerned with matters of productivity, competitiveness, efficiency and economic value adding. One of the key issues for management is performance. Historically, this has focused almost exclusively on financial performance (e.g. Rowe, Morrow and Finch, 1995) – a perspective that is still pervasive today. Maximising wealth is often the main goal for companies (see for example, Welbourne and Andrews, 1996; Becker and Huselid, 1998). When discussing jobs and employment from a performance perspective, there seem to have been an increasing obsession by academic researchers and practitioners within this arena to understand the link between company performance and managing its human resources (Rogers and Wright, 1998). Job considerations from this historical shareholder perspective include:

Is there an efficient utilisation of human resources?

Will this job contribute to an increased competitive advantage?

Can we afford this position?

However, the last two decades have begun to witness a shift away from this dominant view. Some researchers have noted the importance of also considering issues of productivity, safety and/or pay equity when considering performance (e.g. Cowherd and Levine, 1992; MacDuffie, 1995). When monitoring performance, there have also been suggestions of including the concept of purpose, as well as stakeholders' objectives into the construction of performance measures (Venkatraman and Ramanujam, 1986). These days, performance around the triple bottom-line [financial, social and environmental performance] (first coined by Elkington in 1997) is receiving increasing attention. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recently expanded this, referring to the 'quadruple bottom-line', which includes aspects around "ethics" as a fourth component to performance (United Nations, 2012). Associated with this expanded view of performance will not only be improved financial performance arising from a job's increased revenue, sales, and so forth, but also reduced liabilities and costs (short, medium and long term). Therefore, the considerations from management's perspective for a particular job are as follows:

Will this job add to the organisation's financial, social, environmental and/or ethical performance?

Will this job assist with reducing the organisations' risks and liabilities?

Will this job meet a legal or best practice requirement?

*Can we afford to **not** have this position?*

The employee perspective

Psychological perspectives are at the forefront when viewing jobs from the individual perspective. While the concern of managers is the motivation or engagement of the individual, from the employee perspective, it is about having their needs met in the workplace. Various motivational theories have been developed and it has been argued that many of these can provide guidance to management in understanding the needs of employees, and designing jobs and their associated rewards, in a way that will meet these needs (Amos et al., 2008).

The idea of a psychological contract sheds further light on the employee perspective of jobs. The psychological contract can be described as “the expectations of employer and employee which operate over and above the formal contract of employment ... the perceptions of the different parties to the employment relationship of what each owes the other... It incorporates beliefs, values, expectations and aspirations of employer and employee.” (Smithson and Lewis, 2000, pp. 681-682). A fundamental reason for the development of the psychological contract is to reduce uncertainty (or conversely, to increase predictability) regarding the obligations of the parties to the employment relationship (McFarlane-Shore and Tetrick, 1994). From the perspective of an employee, these obligations can be summarised as the organisation giving consideration to the unique needs of the individual (Makin Cooper, and Cox, 1996). A critical question is therefore:

How have the unique needs of the individual been taken into account in the design of the job?

Given that the needs of individuals are dynamic, a further question is:

Is there sufficient flexibility built into the design of jobs so as to ensure that they continue to meet the changing needs of the incumbent?

The trade union perspective

It is argued that the trade union perspective is dominated by the sociological perspective, recognizing an inherent conflict of interest in the workplace between capital and labour. Key concerns relate to the prevention of worker exploitation and the creation and maintenance of decent jobs. The concept of decent jobs originates with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). In 1999, the then ILO Director-General Juan Somavia first introduced the decent work concept describing it as “opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity” (ILO, 1999). A decent work agenda has subsequently been developed by the ILO, including the launch of Country programmes. In September 2006, at its 9th National Congress, South Africa’s largest trade union federation, COSATU adopted a resolution calling for “comprehensive plan to create quality

jobs and to ensure that the millions of unemployed are able to work in conditions of decent work” and “to address casualisation and labour broking through changes to the law”(COSATU, 2006).

In developing the concept of a “decent work deficit”, Webster et al. (2008) identify seven factors of security in the workplace, namely:

1. Labour Market Security (Higher national and regional employment levels create more secure workers as they face less competition from job seekers willing to work for lower wages)
2. Employment Security (Having a contract of employment in the first place, and the amount of protection it affords against arbitrary treatment, and dismissal in particular)
3. Job Security (Having the opportunity as an employee to build a career)
4. Work Security (Health and safety related matters that protection workers against accidents and illness at work, as well as the adverse effects on health of excessive working hours)
5. Skills Reproduction Security (Opportunities for employees to gain and retain formal skills)
6. Representation Security (Having an independent collective voice in the labour market to represent workers’ interests)
7. Income Security (The amount of money earned per week, inclusive of issues such as its regularity, whether there is a minimum income, whether it includes non-wage benefits, and the number of people who depend on the income)

Many of these factors each pose critical questions relevant to appraising the sustainability of a job, including:

Does a contract of employment exist, and does it provide protection against arbitrary treatment and dismissal?

Is the job of a permanent nature so as to offer security of tenure to the employee?

Is the job related to other jobs in a systematic way, so as to create a career path for incumbents?

Is the job relatively free of health and safety risks? And are appropriate and sufficient measures taken to protect workers against accidents and illness in their jobs?

Are working hours reasonable [approximately 40 hours per week] with sufficient rest periods between shifts and with adequate rest intervals during working time?

Are there opportunities afforded to incumbents to develop their job relevant skills and knowledge, particularly when the job competency specifications are changing?

Does the job add sufficient economic value so as to ensure that the incumbent will receive adequate and regular income?

Government's perspective

While governments may contribute to job creation themselves, another prominent responsibility of the state is to regulate the employment conditions surrounding jobs. In the South African context, these regulations are often aimed at addressing many of the workplace security factors identified above. The legal perspective is very prominent here, and at a national government level is particularly evident in the legislation that governs the workplace. Key South African legislation that impacts upon jobs includes:

- The Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, which stipulates minimum employment and working conditions.
- The unfair labour practice provisions of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995. This Act also provides for the concluding of collective agreements between registered trade unions and employers or employers' organisations to set out legally binding terms and conditions of employment that are more favourable than those set out in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act.
- The Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993, which aims to create a safe and healthy working environment.
- The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, which outlaws workplace discrimination on the basis of a number of personal characteristics of employees, while simultaneously addressing the impact of Apartheid on job opportunities through its affirmative action provisions.

- The Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act 130 of 1993, which provides for compensation to employees in the event of injury, disease or death while carrying out the job.

Clearly, there are many detailed stipulations contained in this legislation that impact upon the sustainability of a job. For the purposes of this paper, when appraising the sustainability of a job, a broad question that arises from the legislative framework is:

“Are the legal requirements of the labour legislation framework upheld in the administration, design and management of the job, and supervision of its incumbent, in upholding both the letter of the law and its spirit?”

Organisational perspective

In the context of jobs, the organisation adopts a strategic management and governance perspective. Various authors have noted improved strategic effectiveness of HR systems when these are aligned with the entity’s mission, purpose, values and structure (Caldwell et al., 2011). The same could therefore be applied to a specific function or job when considering the organisational perspective. Issues around governance are also increasingly important to an organisation, especially in the South African context with the King III report and related requirements for JSE-listed companies around integrated reporting (e.g. SAICA, 2010).

Internationally, there has been momentum building towards the adoption of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), with over 8000 organisations now signed to this strategic policy initiative. Launched in 2000 (with a local network set up in South Africa in 2007), this agreement focusses on four key elements regarding an organisation’s sustainability responsibilities: human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption (UNGC, 2012; NBI, 2012).

Garavan (1995a) argued that the objectives of an organisation or job (function) are “a compromise between the different stakeholders” of that. From this point of view, the organisation therefore needs to weigh up all the various stakeholders’ perceptions and requirements and find the balance between these. Although this often leads to conflict and disagreement, which inevitably leads to trade-offs, Freeman (2010, p. 7) reasons that “the idea that one particular group always gets priority is deeply flawed. The very nature of capitalism itself is putting together a deal, or a contract, or a set of relationships among stakeholders so that all can win continuously over a long period of time. As Rhenman, Ackoff and the early stakeholder theorists knew, if you take away the support of any stakeholder you simply do not have a viable business”. Although he acknowledges that trade-offs may seem to be an easier option than trying to accommodate these various interests, he makes a compelling argument for seeing stakeholders’ interests as “joint” instead of conflicting, considering all stakeholders’ interests as being ‘inherently tied together’ (Freeman, 2010, p. 8). Although contrary to what Mitchell et al. (1997) indicated, this is supported by, amongst others, Steyn where she indicates that “[o]rganisations depend on these stakeholders, individually and collectively, for the goodwill required to sustain their operations and for maintaining their license to operate” (PRConversations, 2008, p. 1).

In South Africa, the King III report and guidelines assist with aligning stakeholders’ interests. As one journalist concisely summarised it in the title of her article prior to the launch of the report: “King Report III on Corporate Governance institutionalises Stakeholder Relationship Management” (PRConversations, 2008). This framework can assist organisations (public, private, or non-profit) to better understand their stakeholders and their viewpoints, facilitating a platform for dialogue and engagement in an effort to reach consensus and win-win management approaches for the organisation. The organisation therefore fulfils the role of the ‘ethical steward’ where it is required to balance the best interests of various stakeholders in decision-making and implementation. Ethical stewardship relates to good governance in the pursuit of “best interests of stakeholders by creating high trust cultures that honor a broad range of duties owed by organizations to followers” (Caldwell and Karri, 2005 and Pava, 2003 in Caldwell et al., 2011, p. 173).

Questions that emerge from a holistic, organisational perspective can be summarised below:

Is this job aligned with the organisation's vision, mission, purpose, values, structure and strategic goals?

Does this job represent the combined interests of all stakeholders?

Does the job require an incumbent to demonstrate an understanding of the good governance principles and King III code and implement its requirements within the job's sphere of responsibility and influence?

Does this job meet the requirements set out in the UNGC, including the incumbent's ability to practice, implement and influence the organisation's operations aligned with these principles?

Society's perspective

In the context of jobs, society is represented as a source of labour and as a market for products and services. Questions of social equity are pervasive, as are the organisation's role in other issues such as human rights, education, fighting poverty, hunger and illiteracy, and community engagement (e.g. Garavan and McGuire, 2010). When considering organisations' responsibilities toward society and communities, Bierema and D'Abundo (2004) provided insights into socially conscious human resource development. They highlighted the need for broadening the organisation's traditional interests to also include the improvement of societal welfare and meeting society's expectations. These roles encompass the following:

- “serving an educative and supportive role to help organizations uphold implied contracts and expectations of the organization,
- promoting ethical management and leadership,
- advocating for stakeholders,
- broadening definitions and measures of organization performance,
- challenging and revising socially ‘unconscious’ policies and practices,
- analysing and negotiating power relations, and

- promoting the use of organization resources to create social benefit and improve social welfare” (Bierema and D’Abundo, 2004, p. 443).

As ‘society’ is also the market which engages with an organisation’s goods and/or services, the customer perspective should also be considered. Ferrell (2004, p. 126) explains that the relationship between a company and its customer occurs due to the “mutual expectations built on trust, good faith and fair dealing in their interaction”. Although there are some examples where customers have yielded a commanding voice over an organisation on issues of ethical behaviour (e.g. Walmart and Nike), it does seem as though there aren’t well organised and do not provide a “one-voice” approach by customer groups (Ferrell, 2004). Customers however do offer financial resources, loyalty and can increase an organisation’s reputation relating to its ethics and corporate social responsibility (Ferrell, 2004).

Although this group of stakeholders would be accounted for to some extent (at least indirectly) with some of the other perspectives discussed above (i.e. labour and government), one can summarise society’s view point on a job as follow:

Does the job contribute to a more equitable society?

Do the products and/or services produced by the job bring harm or benefit to society and/or the environment?

Does the execution of the job contribute to the well-being of customers?

Does the job advance the reputation (triple bottom line) and sustainability integrity of the organisation?

A Natural Environment perspective

While the natural environment is often represented by pressure groups in society, or via legislative requirements set by government, in this paper, it has not been treated as a subset of the societal or governmental perspective. This is because its voice may be crowded out by the more immediate concerns of human society, such as issues of social equity, which are so prominent in developing countries such as

South Africa. In other words pressing social concerns may be raised, without necessarily considering the impact of poor environmental and ecosystem health on communities and society at large – which ultimately impacts the economy.

Defining the natural environment as a stakeholder from an organisational perspective has been met with differing opinions. For example, by considering a fairness-based approach, Phillips and Reichart (2000) unpacked the stakeholder theory concept in relation to the natural environment and demonstrated how the environment can be accounted for through legitimate stakeholders of an organisation. They also highlight that stakeholder theory “has never claimed to be a comprehensive ethical scheme, it is argued that sound reasons might exist for managers to consider their organization’s impact on the environment that are not stakeholder-related” (Phillips and Reichart, 2000, p. 185). Countering this position, the discussion below aims to bring forward some additional perspectives that advance the argument of formalising the natural environment as a key stakeholder.

Various authors have argued for a stakeholder theory which integrates the relationship between business and the environment within their management decision-making (Buchholz, 2004; Driscoll and Starik, 2004). After a critique of the Mitchell and Wood model (1997) of stakeholder identification, Driscoll and Starik (2004, p. 55) expanded this framework by “reconceptualising the stakeholder attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency, as well as by developing a fourth stakeholder attribute: proximity” – thereby providing a stronger argument for what they refer to as the “salience of the natural environment as the primary and primordial stakeholder” of a business organisation. Despite the matter still being debated to some extent, the natural environment is increasingly receiving attention as a key stakeholder in organisations when ethics, inclusiveness, fairness and strategic perspectives are considered (e.g. Haigh and Griffiths, 2009; Laine, 2010). Even a capital-derivatives market perspective to traditional stakeholder theory has strengthened the importance of the natural environment as a stakeholder (Norton, 2007).

It is suggested here that according the environment legal status, is one option that provides it with a voice that cannot be ignored, not only on matters of legal compliance, but also in advancing the interests of the natural environment. Ground-breaking decisions and examples are increasing in this respect. Recently, a

river in New Zealand was awarded “legal personhood status” similar to a company’s status that “will give it rights and interests” (Inhabitat, 2012). Here the government and local indigenous community were awarded joint-custodianship over the river, with the objective to protect and allocate its resources, with the intent of “ensuring its wellbeing”.

This aspect as environmental health and wellbeing is also enshrined in the South African Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996, p. 1251), as follows – “[e]veryone has the right:

- a) to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and
- b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that
 - i. prevent pollution and ecological degradation;
 - ii. promote conservation; and
 - iii. secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development”.

Although the Bill of Rights is drafted from the perspective of a citizen, resident and person, it can be argued that these rights are exercised on behalf of the actual natural (biophysical) environment, if it is viewed as a stakeholder. Therefore issues highlighted above, of ecosystem health and avoidance of degradation, conservation, pollution prevention, legal compliance, and the environmentally-responsible use of natural resources, all become critical when assessing the natural environment’s requirements as a stakeholder. This paper has therefore included the natural environment as a stakeholder, when developing the sustainable job framework, raising the following key questions about a job:

Have the job requirements adequately considered risk to the environment?

Will or could the job harm the environment, either directly or indirectly?

Will or could the job benefit the environment, either directly or indirectly?

A SUSTAINABLE JOB FRAMEWORK

Ideas and ideals relating to “decent” and “sustainable” jobs have been investigated and discussed. A framework is now proposed against which the sustainability of either existing jobs or a new job can be appraised. This appraisal highlights the potential deficits and opportunities in the sustainability of a job. Further work around these perspectives should consider a rating scale, whereby a job can be appraised along a sustainability continuum in line with an organisation’s sustainability and corporate social responsibility journey. Refinement of the Mirvis and Googins’ (2006) model seems to fit well here, but is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it should be emphasized that the purpose of this appraisal is not so much to be able to give a job a rating at a particular level of sustainability, but rather to help to set out an agenda for dialogue with various stakeholders. As such it identifies priority areas for HRM to engage with its stakeholders and therefore an agenda for intervention. The table below lists the various questions that have been generated when considering the issue of a sustainable job from the perspective of various stakeholders. The appropriate boxes are ticked or selected, based on the questions being answered. This is as illustration of the first step towards establishing a broad framework for a job’s sustainability, with refinement then taking place later as discussed above.

Table 1: A Sustainability Framework for a Job

Questions	Not addressed in the job: Unsustainable	Areas exist for improvement	Addressed in the job in a sustainable way	This needs further investigation
How have the unique needs of the individual been taken into account in the design of the job?				
Is there sufficient flexibility built into the design of jobs so as to ensure that they continue to meet the changing needs of the incumbent?				
Does a contract of employment exist, and does it provide				

protection against arbitrary treatment and dismissal?				
Is the job of a permanent nature so as to offer security of tenure to the employee?				
Is the job related to other jobs in a systematic way, so as to create a career path for incumbents?				
Is the job relatively free of health and safety risks? And are appropriate and sufficient measures taken to protect workers against accidents and illness in their jobs?				
Are working hours reasonable [approximately 40 hours per week] with sufficient rest periods between shifts and with adequate rest intervals during working time?				
Are there opportunities afforded to incumbents to develop their job relevant skills and knowledge, particularly when the job competency specifications are changing?				
Does the job add sufficient economic value so as to ensure that the incumbent will receive adequate and regular income?				
Are the legal requirements of the labour legislation framework upheld in the administration, design and management of the job, and supervision of its incumbent, in upholding both the letter of the law and its spirit?				
Will this job add to the organisation's performance?				
Is the incumbent competent to meet the job requirements?				
Efficient utilisation of human resources				
Will this position assist with reducing the organisations' risks and liabilities?				
Will this position provide a competitive advantage?				
Will this position meet a legal or best practice requirement?				
Can we afford this position (can we afford to not have this position)?				
Is this job aligned with the organisation's vision, mission, purpose, values, structure and strategic goals?				
Will this job be able to fulfil the role of mediator between different stakeholders and their views?				
Is the job's incumbent able to demonstrate understanding of the good governance principles and King III code? And able to implement its requirements within its sphere of responsibility				

and influence?				
Does this job meet the requirements set out in the UNCG, including the incumbent's ability to practice, implement and influence the organisation's operations aligned with these principles?				
Does the job contribute to a more equitable society?				
Do the products and/or services produced by the job bring harm or benefit to society and/or the environment?				
Does the execution of the job contribute to the well-being of customers?				
Does the job advance the reputation (triple bottom line) and sustainability integrity of the organisation?				
Will or could the job harm or benefit the environment (directly or indirectly)?				
Have the job requirements adequately considered risk to the environment?				
Which skills are required beyond the traditional to ensure this position will adequately incorporate environmental sustainability thinking into its decision-making powers and influence sphere?				

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this paper has been to develop a framework against which the sustainability of either existing jobs or a new job can be appraised, and thereby shape the debates that HRM should be having with various stakeholders to enhance job sustainability. What was evident in developing this framework was the level of complexity of the debate surrounding sustainable jobs. Many of the stakeholder interests are divergent and contradictory, and difficult to reconcile.

Developing the framework has also highlighted the changing role of HRM. In line with an organisational shift away from a shareholder to a stakeholder perspective, the framework highlights the parallel shift from strategic HRM to sustainability HRM. In doing so, it frames a new role for the HRM function as an intermediary between various stakeholders, while simultaneously serving the short and long term interests of the organisation.

In developing sustainable jobs, HRM is challenged in weighing up the importance of the various interests of stakeholders, reflected in different aspects of the job. In terms of the framework, this could be reflected in the “weighting” that is accorded to the various items or questions in coming to an overall appraisal of the sustainability of a job. This paper has not attempted to arrive at an overall rating, or even entered the debate on the relative importance of the various stakeholder perspectives. Similarly, it should be noted that the intent behind the framework was not to create a mechanism to compare or rate the sustainability of one job against another. This paper has simply highlighted the various perspectives as they apply to the sustainability of a job, and thereby created a framework for HRM to converse and engage with various stakeholders.

Finally, it is evident that further research is needed in this area to refine the framework and investigate its utility. In particular, the usefulness of the appraisal framework to HRM practitioners and their stakeholders requires investigation. Possibly this could be done most constructively in a focus group situation, with various stakeholders represented.

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