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DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO FACILITATE SUSTAINABLE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT (SFM) PRACTICE FOR UNIVERSITIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainability practices in facilities management (FM) are vital in reducing the impact of buildings on the natural environment. Such techniques can provide a significant contribution to organisational success in terms of lowering cost, improving efficiency; increasing safety and health; and expanding the value of an investment. While sustainability in management practices is being adopted in university organisations globally, different levels of commitment are experienced in developed and developing countries. It is considered that developed countries are more advanced in adopting sustainability, and, by contrast, the practices within developing countries are still emerging.

ISSUES/PROBLEM STATEMENT

Sustainable development approaches are becoming more critical as the need to achieve the goal of sustainability becomes more pressing. Organisational efforts to put sustainability into practice have been reported in numerous publications. However, most of this literature says on the situation in developed countries (i.e. North America and Europe), and evidence from developing countries is much less common. Moreover, developed and developing countries have varying commitments to sustainable practices. In addressing this knowledge gap, there needs to be research on the extent of sustainability adoption into FM practices and examine the commitment of both developed and developing countries toward sustainability. This study is significant, especially to developing countries, as they need new knowledge to accelerate their effort to improve sustainable practices in FM and expand their organisational sustainability outcomes.

AIM & OBJECTIVES

This research aims to develop a strategic approach which can facilitate the adoption of SFM practice for universities in a developing country from lessons learned from a developed country. In particular, it is comparatively investigate the commitment of developed and developing countries towards sustainability by using a university setting, and to better understand the possible factors (drivers and barriers) that influence the implementation of SFM performance.

METHODOLOGY

With the constraint of the existing knowledge on SFM practices in universities in developed and developing countries, a case study approach was used. A single case study was used to uncover the extent of sustainability adoption in each nation and more attention is given to what can be learned from the cases. This research selected Australia and Malaysia as case studies as both countries have a similar system of government which uses the British Westminster system and are countries with federal-state relationships and structure.

Therefore, to support the argument with an in-depth analysis of the particular countries, a comparative case study analysis was chosen for this research with a variety of data sources by using: **i) website analysis, ii) a questionnaire survey and iii) in-depth interviews.** These three stages have been chosen as they can complement the others.

INSTRUMENTS	INVOLVEMENT	PURPOSES
Stage One Website Analysis	All university websites in Australia (39) and Malaysia (20)	To identify initial sustainability indicators and facilitating the development of the questionnaires.
Stage Two Questionnaire Survey	Total of 107 managers: Australia (50), Malaysia (57)	To determine the extent of sustainability adoption and discovering a relationship between variables.
Stage Three Interviews	26 managers, semi-structured questions: Australia (10), Malaysia (16)	To gain an in-depth understanding and rich picture from participants' own experiences.

The data were then analysed, and conclusions were drawn by using **triangulation analysis** and **cross-case comparisons**. Finally, all relevant findings were used to formulate recommendations to develop the strategic approach that developing countries can adopt.

FINDINGS

- Overall, the study showed **significant differences between developed and developing countries.** This study has demonstrated that SFM performance is **significantly associated with drivers and barriers** embedded in the university organisation.
- Several motivators** led to SFM practice in universities: top management commitment, pressure from stakeholders, policy and strategy in place, availability of knowledge-enhanced programs, collaboration and partnership, and reporting. These factors have pushed university FM departments to adopt more sustainable practices.
- Among the **top barriers** that need to be eliminated are lack of knowledge and understanding, financial constraints, negative organisational culture, lack of awareness, lack of resources and lack of top management's commitment. Indeed, all these factors have potentially contributed to the deceleration of SFM practices within universities.



Based on the research findings, a **strategic approach** that categorizes the motivational factors (drivers) and how they are connected to sustainability performance (outcomes) has been developed.

Malaysian universities could undertake these six (6) key drivers (courses of action) and avoids the barriers to position on a faster track for SFM practice.

NOVELTY

This research contributes significantly to understanding the commitment of developed and developing countries towards SFM practice by identifying and applying the factors that facilitate or hinder its implementation. The strategic approach was designed as an outcome of this research to assist in the successful adoption of SFM practices for universities in Malaysia.

COMMERCIALIZATION

This research provides a new strategic approach for university organisations concerning SFM to enhance their practices. As the strategic direction developed is based on case studies of Australia and Malaysia, it is most likely to apply to other pairs of countries (since the fundamental problems are universal), especially developing countries. However, with some consideration of factors such as diverse administration systems, governance and constitutional frameworks. It will assist in measuring their capacity, performance and threats in adopting sustainable FM practices.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to develop a strategic approach which can facilitate the adoption of SFM practice for universities in a developing country from lessons learned from a developed country by using Australian and Malaysian universities as case studies. The motivation for the research arose from a strong interest in making buildings more sustainable in developing countries. Thus, considering Australia and Malaysia as case studies for this research representing two different economic nations but with similar government systems based on the British Westminster model, there is potential for lessons to be learned explicitly by Malaysian universities.

Generally, the critical elements in the strategic approach could be undertaken by universities in other developing countries to position them on a faster track for sustainable development. Indeed, the prospects of learning from developed countries are worthwhile for sustainability improvement in universities in developing countries.

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