

SUSTAINABILITY REPORT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDUSTRIALISTS, PRACTITIONERS, AND ACADEMICIANS THROUGH POSTMODERNIST IMAGINARY TRIALOGUE

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Abstract

The study is a postmodernism explorative trialogue. The objective of the study is to explore the trialogue between an Industrialist, a Practitioner, and an Academician on Sustainability Report (SR) in relation to the current challenges and opportunities. The exploration of the study is focused on how suitability of SR does provide challenges and opportunities to the three parties. The method of the study is postmodernism in nature using explorative trialogue. The trialogue is gathered through imaginary thoughts among the three parties: an Industrialist, a Practitioner, and an Academician. The results of the study indicate that Sustainability Report could provide richer pictures of the performance of an organization to be shown to their stakeholders. Its opportunities and challenges among them are distinctive and encouraging. Industrialist gets richer benefits from SR with its opportunities being transparent and stakeholders inclusiveness. Similarly, Practitioner gets challenges of understanding SR standards and its implementation. For Academician, its challenges are creating new knowledge and competency.

Keywords: Sustainability Report, Postmodernism, Imaginary Trialogue

Prologue: Introducing the Trialogue – Industrialist, Practitioner, and Academician

I started some thoughts of this study by thinking what contributions are necessary to be added at the main theme of the National Seminar in Pangkal Pinang. I received texts from Dr. Inten Meutia for some months ago asking me to schedule the 16 November for the Seminar. We have for some times not in contact for

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academic purposes. I was delighted to hear her invitation, even though I did not know what would be its topic to be discussed. As declared, the National Seminar is given by the Organising Committee which is Sustainability Report: Challenges and Opportunities for Industrialists, Practitioners, and Academicians. I appreciated with an invitation addressed to me, several months ago as one of the resource persons at the Seminar. The main theme of the Seminar is to Sustainability Report, its concept, framework and standards to discuss innovative ideas and contemporary issues. The Seminar is expected to improve the dissemination of knowledge among various stakeholders related to the Sustainability Report. It is an honor for me to be one of resource persons as one of among others from different backgrounds. My thought is concerning the innovation of how to prepare a report of sustainability activities.

Sustainability is a word that we could trace back since the early 18th century. But, in fact, there was no any concept relating the word of sustainability concerning environment, society and economic impacts up to 1960s. It could be traced when Howard Bowen (1956) wrote the English book of Social Responsibility of Businessmen. But then, the word of sustainability booming when it was introduced by the Global Reporting Initiative in 1997. In 1997, Coalition for Economically Responsible Economies (Ceres) started a Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) aimed at developing a sustainability information disclosure framework. In 1999, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) joined with Ceres as a partner in the GRI project. In 2000, the first GRI Sustainability Reporting Guidelines were issued and almost 50 companies issued sustainability reports using these guidelines. A year later, the GRI became an independent organization and subsequently relocated in the Netherlands. GRI was launched to establish reporting guidelines for the triple bottom line: economic, social, and environmental performance (See Sukoharsono, 2010).

Referring to the main theme of the Seminar, the purpose of the study is to explicate the trialogue on Sustainability Report: Challenges and Opportunities for Industrialists, Practitioners, and Academicians. To explicate the study, I use a framework of an imaginary research trialogue using the perspective of Postmodernism. The imaginary trialogue is between three persons: with naming Industrialist and Practitioner, and Academician. The three graduated at the postgraduate university at University of Brawijaya in the accounting major. The Industrialist is a gentleman who engage as a businessman, the Practitioner is an accountant who is practicing as a public accountant, whereas the Academician is a senior accounting academician. The three are focusing on the discussions of sustainability report disclosures innovation.

The trialogue is started by:

Industrialist : Academician, Let us think now, do you know what is Sustainability Report?

Practitioner : I think it would be good to ask firstly about as you, Industrialist, asked.

Industrialist : It seems to me that there are two words should be defined at first.

Practitioner : Yes, I agree with you ... (with curious to look around waiting the answer)

Practitioner : Thus, what are the definitions according to you? (*with looking at Academician ... for curiosity waiting a response*)

Academician : (*He feels everyone is waiting his response*) I will think seriously concerning the two definitions: Sustainability is a complex concept. The most often quoted definition comes from the UN World Commission on Environment and Development: “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of

the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Report or Account is a document containing information organized in a narrative, graphic, or tabular form, prepared on ad hoc, periodic, recurring, regular, or as required basis.

Industrialist : Wow ... You did it very well, Academician. It seems both definitions are well constructed.

The definitions are the beginning of the study to understand a sustainability report through an imaginary research trialogue. The objective of the study is to explicate some issues on sustainability report and its challenges and opportunities for Industrialists, Practitioners, and Academicians.

Method of Explication

The study is postmodernism in nature. It explicates some issues on sustainability report and its challenges and opportunities for Industrialists, Practitioners, and Academicians. Postmodernism is used as a distinct way to bring up ideas in researcher minds based on observed and unobserved phenomena of sustainability report (Sukoharsono, 2016, 2018). Three participants are made up to have a trialogue imaginarily. They are with the names of Industrialist, Practitioner, and Academician. The three graduated at the postgraduate university at University of Brawijaya in the accounting major. The Industrialist is a gentleman who engage as a businessman, the Practitioner is an accountant who is practicing as a public accountant, whereas the Academician is a senior accounting academician. The three are focusing on the discussions of sustainability report disclosures innovation.

Industrialist : Junior, the idea using postmodernism is because it gives much open up our minds of the ways we do to write and explore our ideas. No one could stop our thinking.

Academician : Yes, you are right, Industrialist, for me, postmodernism is unstructured mode of writing. That is why, an imaginary research trialogue is one of objectives to explore some strategies that could be understood by readers.

Industrialist : Some references are collected as sources, and experiences are also as sources of knowledge.

GRI Standards are important to be used to understand the concept of reports. Sustainability Reports prepared by listed companies in Indonesia Stock Exchange, e.g. PT. Pertamina, PT. Pupuk Kaltim and PT. Bank Negara Indonesia.

Practitioner : Definitely this is a research too.

Academician : Why it is not. Yes, it is. Imagination is energizing your thoughts and lives.

Academician : Explication means by giving explicit writing in a comprehensive way of thought, whereas imaginarily means to express a belief of thought that could energize our lives or the existed things.

Opportunities for Industrialist, Practitioners and Academicians

To start discussing the opportunities, we might have some thoughts what is meant by opportunities. We must define it clearly. Ontologically, there are three environments in the decision-making process that could be used as propositions which are certainty, uncertainty and risk. Risk is a condition where opportunity values can be given to each outcome or event. How far the decision is taken in a risk depends on who will take the decision whether the business people, industrialists or managerial level in an organization. However, although this kind of decision is arguably rare, it still needs to be taken into consideration.

Academician : My friends: Industrialist and Practitioner, we must define it what is meant by opportunities. Academically, we start by knowing the description of opportunities.

Academician : That is why we cannot ignore knowing it by its definition.

Practitioner : That is right for you, Academician. I agree to have it.

Academician : Terminologically understanding opportunities are opportunities that a person can use to get what he wants (profit - wealth - money) by utilizing the various resources he has. That is the term is based on the business context.

Academician : (Continually ...) Opportunity is merely a way to express the chance of an event. *Qualitatively* the opportunity can be expressed in adjective form to indicate the possibility of a situation such as "good", "weak", "strong", "poor", "little" and so forth. *Quantitatively*, opportunities are expressed as numerical values both in fractions and decimals between 0 and 1. Opportunity equal to 0 means that an event cannot occur while an opportunity equal to 1 means that the event must occur.

Industrialist : I like it with the above descriptions. It is really helping me understanding it.

Practitioner : Academically, its important word must be explained.

Academician : Let us now think this important thing for the word of opportunities.

Academician : For simple events, opportunities can be derived either logically, through empirical observation or subjectively. These three forms of opportunity have important implications for managers, especially in the decision making process.

Logical Opportunities

All processes that can be predicted and completely defined enable us to deductively determine the opportunities of the results that occur. Unfortunately, many business people are not included in this category. Actually

decreasing logical opportunities is something worth examining, because the ability to predict simple processes can often provide clues for managers to improve actions in dealing with complex or unpredictable situations.

Thus its Definition is: the logical opportunity of an event is the ratio between the number of events that can occur with the sum of all the results that can occur, where these results can be derived from an experiment.

Industrialist : Ooo ... it is good ... based on the logical opportunity. Any things else?

Academician : Now, this is based on 'empirical opportunities'

Academician : Many cases where managers do not follow the pattern of opportunities as described above. Most likely this is due to not understanding what exactly means by the opportunity. For cases like this, it is more suitable to refer to opportunities based on observational data or empirical data.

Empirical opportunities or some who call it *an objective opportunity*, can only be obtained through experiments or experiments conducted repeatedly, under the same conditions and expected in large numbers. From this experiment information will be generated in the form of relative frequencies which are very useful especially for the purposes of improving a system.

Academician : Now the last one is called subjective opportunities.

Academician : Subjective Opportunities, a common problem faced by a manager is when he is unable to predict the process of an event coupled with the unavailability of adequate data. To solve a problem like this, usually a manager will give a certain opportunity value to the event based on qualitative factors, experience with similar situations or even intuition.

Practitioner : Now, so how is then ...?

Industrialist : Of course now we start by exploring our own perspective of the opportunities of the SR for us.

Academician : Ok, who is the first one to explore the opportunities of the SR?

Industrialist : Ok, I am the first.

Industrialist : I could say that the opportunities for me is: when I produce the SR yearly, the SR could provide me and my industry with the following:

- Trustworthiness,
- better reputation,
- more stakeholder engagement,
- attracting capital to the company,
- better company performance

Practitioner : Now is my turn to explore the benefits of SR for its opportunities in the profession.

Practitioner : As a practitioner in providing services to prepare the SR, this has opportunities as follows:

- SR Could create a new profession: CSRS and CSRA
- New tasks and responsibility
- Getting new knowledge
- Contributing to the development of standards
- Creating new Jobs to prepare SR and its assurance

Academician : Let me think now about the opportunities of SR for me are

- New studies programs offered
- New knowledge and skills
- New research topics
- New community services
- New tasks and responsibilities

Challenges for Industrialist, Practitioners and Academicians

The meaning of the word challenge is the thing or object that inspires determination to improve the ability to overcome problems. Challenge also means stimulation (to work harder and so on). Challenge could be singular and plural. Challenge is a part of everyday life. It makes us stronger and without it life becomes somewhat meaningless because we have nothing to compare the good times to. The challenges come in many forms. For some, the challenge is doing well at a university, for others it is getting to grips with financial worries. But, regardless of the challenge, facing up to it is key. Doing so will make you feel like you can take care of yourself, it will also make you understand the value of what you have now.

In the context of SR, its emergence is bringing challenges to many fields: Industrialists, Practitioners, and Academicians.

Industrialist : For me, the SR has challenges me and the company with the following:

- Being More Transparent
- Being More Accountable
- Being More Responsible
- Being More Fairness
- New Competency of Employees

Practitioner : Different to the Industrialist, I am really appreciated it with its development, where it creates some positive effects as follows:

- New Knowledge
- New Standards to be learned
- New Competency
- More Time Spent to prepare

- More Team with diverse knowledge
- New Educational Requirements

Academician : For me, it really helps to enrich knowledge in the academic atmosphere. The SR could bring challenges such as:

- Create new Knowledge
- Create new Competency
- Create new Curriculum Design
- Build new references
- Enrich New standards to be learned

Academician : It is believed that for academic atmosphere, the existence of SR has a wide range of teaching/ lecturing techniques in use. Why? The set of lecturing techniques to educate its contents of SR strongly depends on the instructional form of lectures (face to face lecture, education by correspondence or distance education). Apart from the ubiquitous lecture, the consultation revealed the following list (which is far from exhaustive)

- Seminar (small group teaching)
- Tutorials
- Research seminar
- Exercise classes or courses
- Workshops (classroom based practical classes)
- Problem-solving sessions
- Laboratory teaching
- Demonstration classes
- Placement (internship/traineeship)
- Work based practice
- Fieldwork
- Online / Distance or e-learning: which may be paper based or ICT based

Academician : The above lecturing techniques are necessary to be thought, so that the knowledge could be transferred. It is different to what Industrialist and Practitioner have.

Epilogue: Richer Opportunities and Greater Challenges

To end the study, it is concluded that some contributions of SR could not be denied. SR is bringing richer opportunities and greater challenges. The dialogue concludes that from the three has distinctive and encouraging to be more developed.

Industrialist : I really get more benefits from the SR. I could be more transparent of my industrial activities and more stakeholders' inclusiveness.

Practitioner : Similar to Industrialist, I could get some challenges of understanding of SR standards to be implemented to industrial performance reports.

Academician : From my point of views, SR could bring more opportunities in the way of creating new knowledge, curriculum design and etc., and also getting more challenges in the way of creating new competencies.

Academician : We are now coming to the end ...(shaking hands to the three of them).

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