16 Corporate sustainability: future directions

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INTRODUCTION

In previous chapters of this book various conceptual frameworks, case applications, and social communication/reporting of corporate sustainability have been presented by respected researchers from around the globe. While the dimensions of corporate sustainability have been widely agreed (economic, social and environmental) it was revealed that frameworks to practise corporate sustainability vary widely across the world. In a recent article Schneider (2009) highlights the need for some organizational pre-conditions for effective sustainability performance. Starting from the definition of sustainable development (WCED, 1987) the author highlights that corporate sustainability is a sub-set of much higher level ‘sustainable development’. The study also notes that an organization needs to redesign itself and its value chain to achieve corporate sustainability. This view is also shared by Ndumolu et al. (2009).

Schneider (2009) relates the need for ‘sustainable competencies’ to achieve ‘corporate sustainability performance’ (the intended outcome). Figure 16.1 shows this relationship. The figure highlights that an organization needs to achieve sustainability competencies in order to achieve organization wide sustainability performance. We agree with this framework. Our research in the Australian context has shown that some organizations acquire some aspects of corporate sustainability without achieving enough sustainability competencies. As a prerequisite an organization therefore needs to achieve both sustainability competencies and sustain-ability performance.

In this chapter we present popular schemata to measure sustainability performance and present some of their outcomes. We then present our understanding of future directions of corporate sustainability research and practice. In doing so we shall use the framework of Schneider as depicted in Figure 16.1.