ADOPTION OF GREEN HOME DESIGNS - BRIDGING THE GAP OF CSRR

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Abstract: *Environment has taken care of human beings with its tender hands by providing necessary resources from stone-age times. In the present era, globe is bargaining between environmental sustainability and business. Many nations across the world have tightened monitoring by authorizing independent agencies to keep watch on companies to curb environmental degradation. One of the tools that are being used by governmental agencies is CSRR/CER. When confronted with conflicting options, any government would always tally between profits, GDP, economic development to trees, fresh air, and fresh water. If the leadership is not strategically driven, then it would certainly make a choice of profits to trees. All leaderships in the world have realized that power is crucial and money provides power. Though corporate environmental reporting has been made compulsory, many companies manage to evade. As a result of heavy industrialization, people need places to work, park vehicles, thousands of people are being accommodated. Concrete jungles have started sweeping away huge proportions of land be it industrial buildings or civil constructions. This has become an era of huge energy consumption and carbon emission. This article explores the role CSRR in controlling environmental degradation and draws a line where CSRR role gets helpless. Then green alternatives have been introduced in building new homes that pose a great contribution for the planet. A conceptual model has also been proposed that shows the factors affecting the green building acceptance. If these factors are taken care of, then evangelizing business community to adopt green building may not be too far from the reality.*

Key Words: *CSRR/CER, Green Building, Innovation, Environment*

Introduction:

The concept of CSRR/CER (corporate social responsibility report/corporate environmental report) surfaced after many factors like shareholder pressure, environmental legislation and lobbying groups such as shareholder activism started their role to play. These factors played crucial role in rising of CSRR and CER in the west but in the east, factors like occupational safety, environment and community support activities impacted the growth and popularity of CER and CSRR (Yamagami & Kokubu, 1991; Zaman, 2003; Kawahita, 2005). Companies cannot ignore the society that has a give and take policy with the business entity. According to (Mcwiliams and Siegel 2001), CSR can be defined as situations that make a firm to think beyond the obvious for doing some good to society without looking at the benefits reaped form that activity. Society gives civilized knowledgeable human resources to the company and the company in turn not only should give employment and salary but also ensure that the quality and standard of living in the society is not below average level that directly impacts on the human resource and company's work culture.

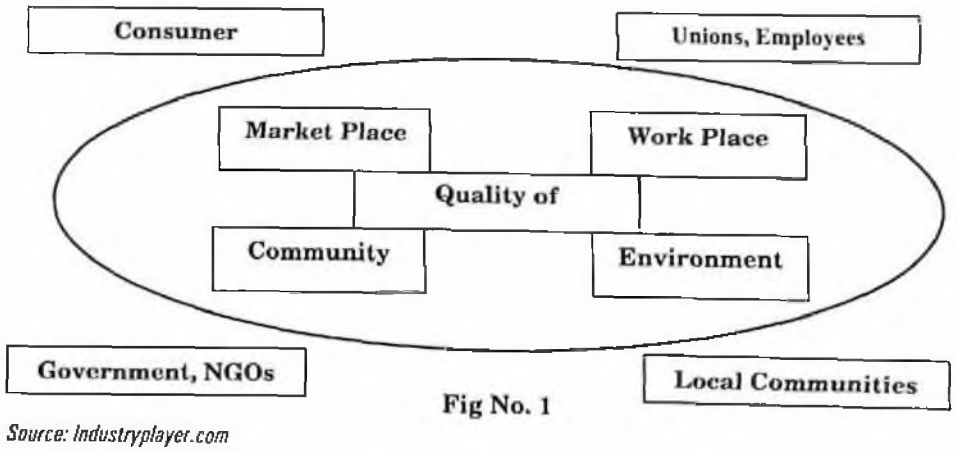


Fig No. 1

Source: Industryplayer.com

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The above diagram explains dimensions or perspectives the company has to cater. All these roles be it shareholder, employees, local communities and finally government should reap the benefit of CSR. The company has to handle all these players and satisfy them directly and indirectly the system with utmost transparency. The crucial thing that is targeted by any general manager employed by the employer is shareholder wealth maximization. It is good for company from a holistic view. Society will not take it lightly if a company doesn't have respect or care for its social values. CSR is not a rule that fits in "one for all" logic for corporate. Instead, each firm is different from its profitability and nature. So each firm should define its own social that include environmental responsibilities based on its capabilities (Hohnen and Potts 2007).

As time has passed, the kind of seriousness that is expressed by whistle blowing environmental issues has seen drastic change. In 1960s, witnessing the technological advance and environmental degradation, certain areas was protected from the treacherous hands of business communities. People were encouraged to visit these places to have a feeling of getting close to nature. But later as imbalance and bulk un-ecological practices started in the name of economic development, in the decade of 1970s many disasters surfaced and one of the worst disasters was oil leakage in the coastal areas of US started spreading to coast and resulted in death of sea animals and plants. Public and government though worried didn't heed attention and neglected it as there was no interference at their living place. When things started getting murkier in their locality, public started demanding clean air, water, breathe and to live with serenity (Brundtland report 1987, earth summit Rio de Janeiro, 1992). Notwithstanding the frequent mass protests by the people, governments across the world came to know that a lot of hide and seek is being played by corporate in the name of business and economic development. Environment awareness creating groups highlighted ruthless exploitation of natural resources for eg: Exxon Mobil in Africa. Then it was made mandatory that every company shall have a stand alone report on corporate social responsibility whore it signifies the delicacy with which business activities are been carried out without harming ecological balance and the additional contribution that has been made to the environment without expecting any benefit. It is not distant truth that government has a back channel to give every possible support to business community in the name of economic development. With this support business communities are still exploiting resources and some organizations when pursued by environmental groups to strictly adhere to norms, express a great fear about additional maintenance costs in completely greening their business.

Therefore an initiative for creating awareness about green building designs has to be started with a successful win-win strategy business model. The first initiator in terms of creating awareness about green building is Intel Corp. In the year 2004, Intel started construction of a building in Israel with a concept of green. Except some environmental groups, general public were not all aware of this green concept. With this, green building concept has received good acceptance from some niches across international community by closely looking at the feasibility of the activity. When something about going green is made aware, every one gets skeptic about the affordability, workability of the project. The word "green" in green building symbolizes efficient utilization of resources and also it offers many health benefits to customers like increased air quality, comfortable room temperature, cost effective construction, efficient use of land and improved durability. The concept of building houses that are environment friendly by using resources efficiently, adding sustainable components to the building is Green Building. This technique also emphasizes using solar energy in a more creative way to reduce power consumption and save rain water. Problem for industries to adopt the methodology was it may take huge time to construct a green building. But with the latest technologies and methods the time consumed is as same as conventional building. Industries by adopting green building methods can relish a good image among public and internal marketing or employer branding process will be a positive addition to the company's image.

Modern world cares very little about environment and big people with big money are free of all shackle The modern concrete buildings give very less priori to energy conservation. The supply sources of natu have been torn apart by indiscriminate usage resources. The unplanned quantities of ra materials used to build a structure are serving a active contributors to the pollution in an area. In developing countries and heavily populated area like China and India houses are constructed in congestion that makes energy consumption more People have to face the consequences on one fine day and the building industry leaders are very much aware of resources getting extinct and have started exploring other innovative ways to build houses to

gain competitive advantages. India as a growing economy has contributed significantly to the global warming and environmental exploitation. The developing countries need fuels as energy source and infrastructure as a catalyst to the growth mechanism. IGBC (Indian green building council) has many industries as its members already but the huge energy consumers are the real estate owners who have been developing concrete jungles in busy areas.

Literature Review

According to (Keal, 2002), earlier activities related to CSR were perceived as philanthropy. These terminologies again were increasingly perceived to be confined within employee-employer relationships. But philanthropy later widened its scope by stretching its reach to wider community of people in the form of schools, hospitals started by successful business men. According to (Wulfson, 2004), Corporate philanthropy is an older form of corporate social responsibility. Among the principles of corporate philanthropy it is believed that CSR should focus towards economic responsibility primarily; followed by legal and ethical responsibilities. In US, environmental reporting got a boost from the porter's communication of advantages on greening of America (Rondinelli and Vastag 1996). Initially companies started looking at environmental reporting with skepticism as estimated increased costs that would intervene in their operation process (Gladwin and Walters, 1976). Later, as governments across the world started imposing tough rules and regulations, companies got a tip off that they cannot take CER /CSRR for granted. As it is said that species evolve as environment changes, even companies started probing ways to dodge what was perceived as meaningless obligation by them with the help of advisors. Reports were presented in such a manner where it would impress the reader or the authority while in the time of scrutiny. Some companies that are situated in regions where good governance is absent didn't have to bother about producing or maintaining a standalone CSRR/CER report (Othman and Radiah, 2009). If we go on digging out literatures on sanctions, controlling tools on pollution, exploitation of resources, there can be data presentations made in numerous rows and columns but the question is to what extent they are effective in achieving the end result? If we cannot change the present consuming pattern or habits of the business community, then governments have to think about slowly and systematically transforming the way things are consumed.

According to Energy efficiency and renewable energy department in US, if a separate house is built for a family, four pounds of waste per square foot is generated and in addition to that, fifteen to seventy pounds of waste is generated from paint, roofing cement, adhesives, solvents and greases. A consumer basically opts for green products when he gets a feeling of doing something good to the nature (Akerlof, 1970). In Indian city of Bangalore the summer of the year 2010 was the hottest in the decade and temperature reached above 37 degree Celsius and touched a mark of 38 degree Celsius which normally should be around 33 degrees(*IMD, 2010). It was stated that sudden increase in temperature was caused by the concrete jungles and air conditioners running inside the office cabins (DNA, 2009).

In US, according regulatory authority commission, the residential sector consumes 21.8 percent of national energy and also is responsible for 21 percent of national carbon dioxide emissions. If the US with such population consumes this much of energy, when compared to India, the consumption rates will be far higher. In developing countries, water is moving towards becoming scarce natural resource due to pollution, depleting ground water levels, untimely rains and on the whole, climate change. The green options facilitate more water conservation alternatives. The green methodology aims to give the proven water recycling system. The costs can be cut by using environment friendly components and materials to build. This industry is in infant stage at US and predicted to grow rapidly by giving solution as space, raw materials, water problems emerge. After US and European countries, India has emerged as an attractive destination for green building industry. According to Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), demand for the materials used in construction of green building would reach more than $4 billion by 2012. The health aspects of the people are very well addressed by green building methodologies. Like other man made things have their own cycle, even the houses have their daily cycle in which water, heat, light are used and wastes are generated. Green building methods reduces carbon emissions by 35%, water wastage by 30-50%. As the amount of moisture in the stagnant air increases the chances air quality depletion also assists in microbes' growth. Green methods can help in circulation of more stagnant air than stagnant air.

According to CBRE (2009), seven top Indian cities have added over 280 million sqft and Asian tigers like Singapore, Seoul and Hong Kong have added

over 297 million square ft as office space. Point Carbon, a Thompson Reuters company has rated India as the best in categories of hydropower, biomass generation, thermal power, and wind energy and landfill site management. There are some myths that have spread fast about green buildings practices. Because of these, consumers are growing increasingly skeptical of these practices. The first one is green building attracts more costs than traditional structures. Some people get away by hearing they are going to use recycled material but people should know that these are perfectly engineered to meet the purpose. Other development is the information that materials used for constructing the green homes are getting cheaper. For example a waterless urinal was costing about 14k per piece in 2001 but now it is available at 6k only. The other doubt with which people end up is green buildings has to be air conditioned. But on the contrary green buildings facilitate cleaner air flow with proper ventilation.

Objectives

The main objective of the study is to evaluate corporate social responsibility reporting as an important alternative to control environment degradation. The study also adopts a sub objective to suggest green home design as a tool to transform the way natural resources are consumed by the business community to construct buildings. Classification of green products based on their usage and applicability as well as identifying factors that affects the successful adoption of green building practices has also been made. Some organizational bodies have to stand for the promotion of green building practices and at the final backdrop it is the government that should ensure the perfect implementation of green home building practices.

GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) - A Positive CSRR/CER Initiative

As per the statute of many nations in the world, every company should have stand alone reports on environment performance as well as social responsibility. Many companies are striving to maintain the toughest balance between business and ecology

Evolution of CSRR

A reporting standard that supports comparability between corporations should emerge in order to facilitate transparency (Beets and Souther 1999). It is getting increasingly difficult for managers to wash off hands after presenting financial performance report because there is something the public and governmental entities want to see. CSRR/CER is used to associate sustainability, corporate citizenship and socially responsible investment.

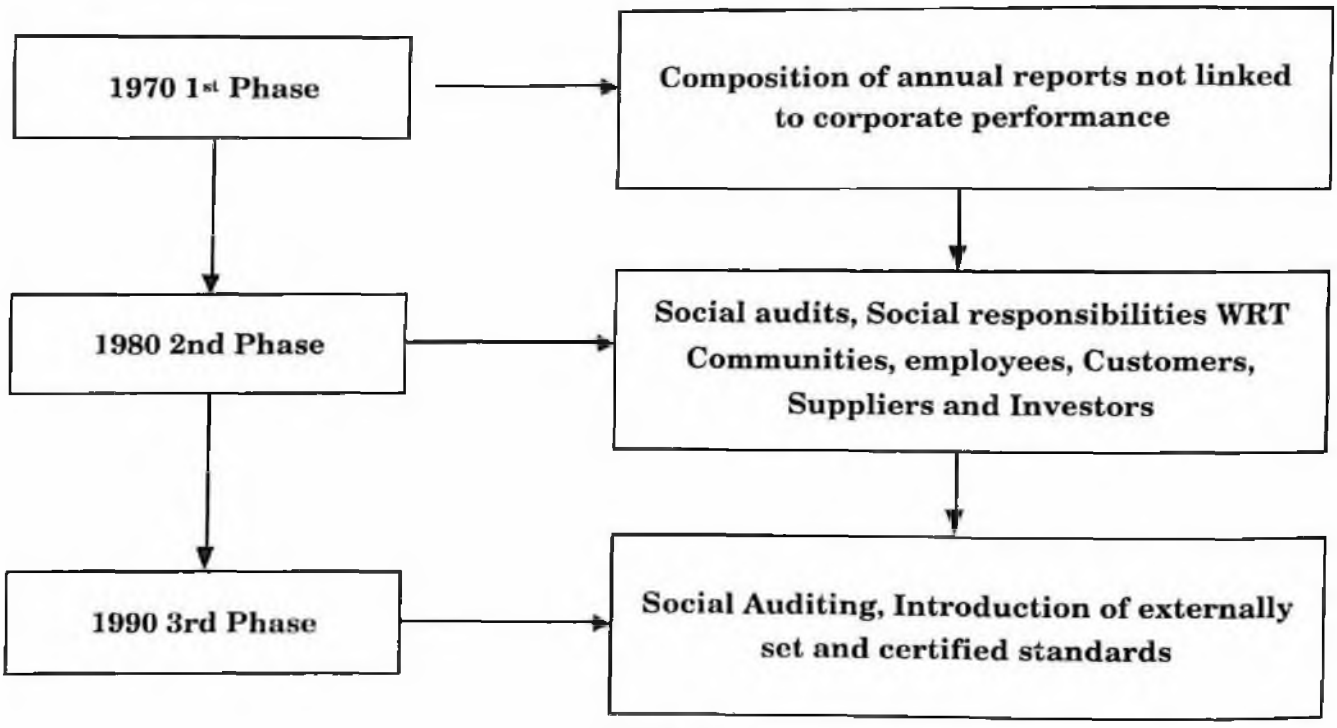


Fig No. 2

Source: Intel, "Technology with the Environment in Mind", Intel Technology Journal, Feb 2008, Vol 12, Iss 1, Page No. 49-59.

The above diagram explains the way CSRR/CER has evolved over a decades of time. In this complete change process every phase has equipped CSRR with new teeth to bite corporations for environmental responsibility. Though the current report standards of CER are appreciable; the difference in terms of content and depth coverage makes the key readers (committees, authorities) while performing scrutiny bored. In the year 1997, global CS reporting initiative was launched keeping sustainability element in the focus. GRI report format has been instructed to prepare in a way where it contains details that caters to all the stakeholder needs for information.

The advantage of this initiative is as follows

- Every corporation in the world irrespective of its size, nature, industry reports the same issue that is covered in more or less same number of pages that doesn't irk the reader.
- Better monitoring will be promoted where more specific reports would increase the credibility of the system and facilitate comparability amongst all the corporations.

As GRI comes up with much segregation about social, environmental reporting, CSRR/CER still remains as a choice for many companies. There is a difference in the way of perception made by small firms and large firms to CSRR. The key element that makes small firm think different is lack of public or political pressure. For small firms, it is the customers among all the stakeholders matter first and they tend to resist any proposal pushed by the government for promoting rules and regulations pertaining to social responsibility. According to (Gray 2007), corporate social reporting should be included in the companies' act of all nations that freezes the effort made by companies to evade. He has even criticized the traditional reporting as faulty representation and misguiding of real world issues. Many reports are always dominated by financial performances as world is running behind money.

Green Acceptance Model and Green Products Classification

As we realize that even CSRR does not have enough teeth to bite the environmental problem, a plan can be drawn to transform the proposed concrete structures in the future that get built by exploitation of resources. There comes Green building as a silver lining. Firstly green products can be called as green when these products satisfy certain criteria. The products should contain green ingredients that are used to build/manufacture it. So the question arises how do you classify a product as green? A product becomes green when it is manufactured or prepared by recycled products, and products which are made non toxic compared to its previous toxic versions, products that contribute to the balance of ecology by not harming air, water, soil, animal life and plants. It may be industrial outputs or any left outs from activities. For example iron slags are used to make mineral wool or the citrus oil that is a waste content while extracting orange and lemon juice. Second category can be the products that stand as substitute for the previous components and conserve the resources by using less polluting material comparatively to the older one and more durable. For example, fluorescent lamps with low mercury levels, drywall clips allow the elimination of corner studs fiberglass windows have exceptional durability or low maintenance requirements.

Third category belongs to the products that avoid polluting of surroundings. These products have greater importance as they contribute more to the green theme. These products consume less energy while being manufactured as well as on full use. Examples for these products are wood products, agricultural or plant products. Green wastewater disposal systems ensure that ground water do not get polluted due to organic toxic wastes. There are certain green products specially designed or manufactured to cater the specific needs like structured insulated panels (SIPs), insulated concrete forms (ICFs). These materials have been accepted in a large scale by current societies. SIPs help improving performance in floors, walls, and roofs for a building. Plastic insulation is inserted between two skins of board. By doing this, the temperature inside the house will be under control and also a strong and reliable structure is guaranteed. From the builders point of view this product reduces the number of constructing hours to complete the work with a minimum number of labor.

ICFs



Fig No. 1
Source:http://www.greenstrides.com/2008/04/04/icfs-insulated-concrete-forms/

SIPs

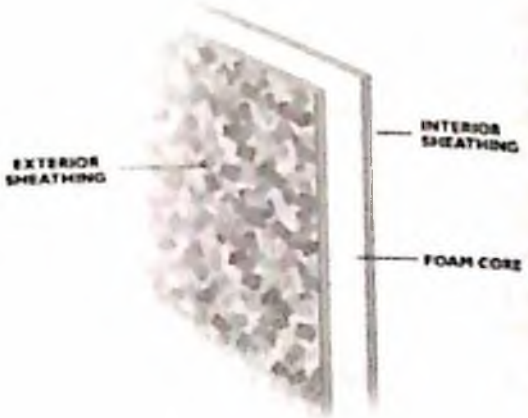


Fig No. 2
Source: http://www.sips.org/content/about/index.cfm?pageId=7

ICF is about some components locking up without intermediate materials like mortar. The concrete is poured in between by the help of a pump enabling it to become strong concrete and green structure. Two panels are joined through plastic or interlocking forms. The green methodology implies the use of solar water heaters, photovoltaic systems that use renewable energies in the place of fossil fuels. Green toilets systems and rain water catchment systems help a user to conserve more water. Last category of green products includes product that contributes to the safety and health of the individuals inside the home. Generally paints contain toxic chemicals and the green options for this could be low or zero-VOC paints. VOC is volatile organic compound that is released by paints and also they are emitted from the use of cleaning, personal care products, and insecticides. According to environment protection agency, VOCs contribute significantly to the smog that is different from fog. Long exposures to smog may result lung tissue damage and serious respiratory illness to human being and a considerable amount of damage to agricultural crops. There are instruments through which indoor air quality can be measured by detecting amount of carbon monoxide (CO). According to (Raghupathy.s, 2004), by the year 2007, the green buildings share was 12%. Good amount of industries have come forward and exploited the benefits of the green building but urban prospective house builders need to switch over to the green building.

Green Building Acceptance Model

Whenever there is a new concept people's perceived risk runs high. Building a house is a great ambition and also it is a great desire to be secured for any human being. When there are huge amount of capital and interests vested, people start growing too suspicious when the new products are pushed more and more. With the amount of high level deceiving by many business people rising, it is very premature to launch a green campaign. When an individual becomes aware of the green option, he tends to extract information from the other guy who doesn't know a thing about green building. Instead, he can consult a design professional and reach a perfect decision. Generally there are heavy budgets involved in the construction of these buildings. Without the help of external financial lenders the work can't go smooth. The lenders (Banks, Financial institutions) doesn't make any difference in charging the rate of interest when they give loans for green buildings. Government has some important roles to be played by giving tax incentives. Public can get attracted towards these homes and by imposing strict norms and policies. After some time, green home building may be considered as an option in the minds of people. Monitoring is vital for rigorous checking of progress. Government should set a deadline to adopt green methods in the building homes

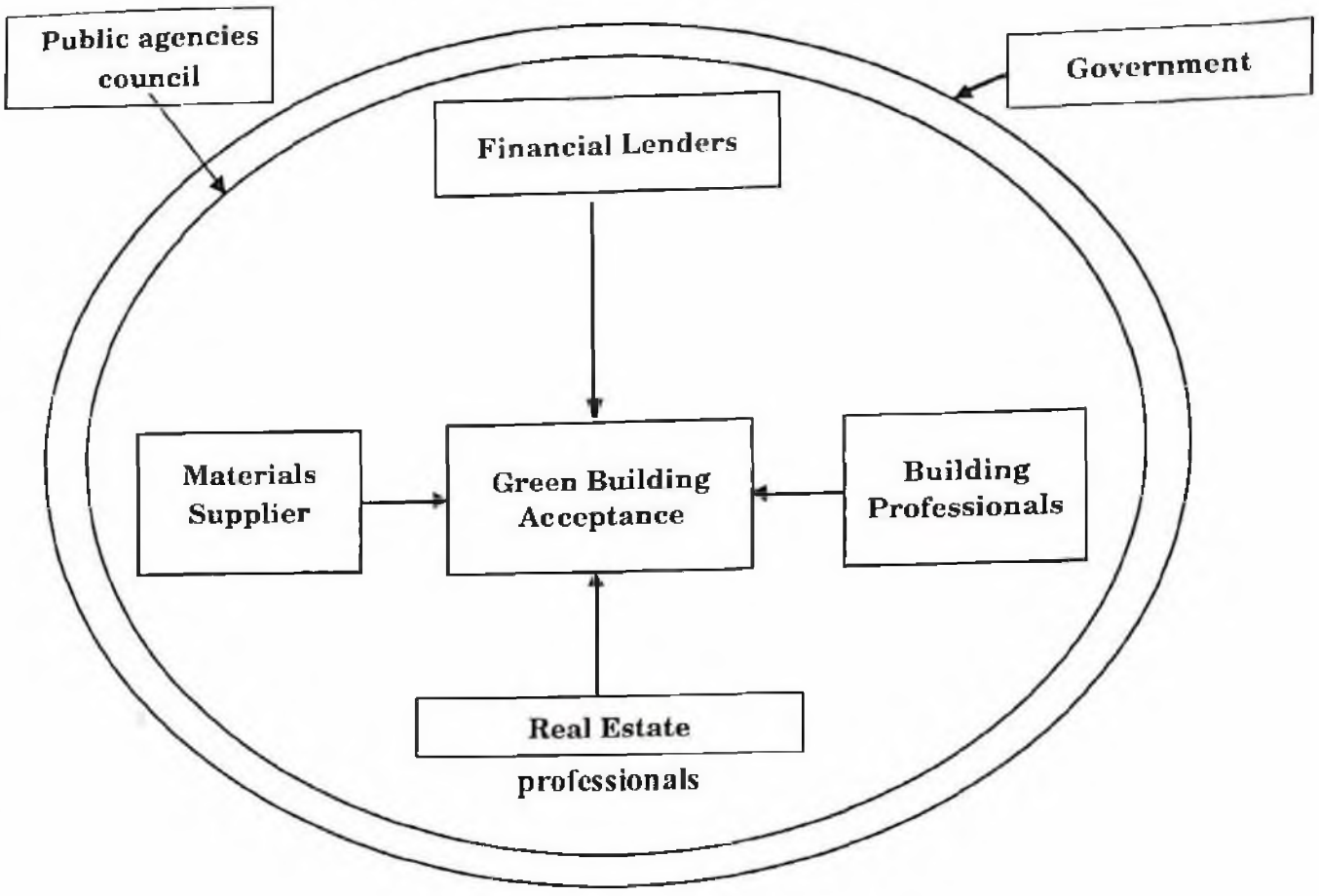


Fig No. 3

Conceptual Model for acceptance of green building methods

The above diagram depicts the role of government and public agencies as primary initiators. Government is like big brother above all the entities. If there is no genuine attempt to implement a scheme, then the failure reflects on government seriousness. The public agencies/ councils formed by government must act to achieve target goals. These macro factors should act in a positive way by creating a good atmosphere and scope for the new industry development. After two important macro factors, the lenders like banks, financial institutions should identify the green buildings and promote lending by offering attractive schemes. The real estate professionals should get updated by learning the land or site requirements for a sustainable green home building and later they can generate revenues from a niche market. Because green buildings need a site that supports the design pattern adopted by building professionals. Both building as well as real estate professionals should come together and work in co-ordination for generating better results. If one successful, performing green structure is built and its advantages are reaped by consumers, the word of mouth marketing will be the most effective way than any other green campaign being launched from public or private agency. Last factor for the success of green building is, the availability of materials required for the construction by the supplier. As the different projects are undertaken by many suppliers across widely distributed areas, the availability is not a problem but the supplier should adhere to the time deadlines and if materials reach the builders in time, the green building projects will run smooth and success of green building results when there is acceptance by large group of people.

The term called "Eco-label" is being used by green construction companies. This seal or logo is familiar among architects, designers and builders in the west where this seal is an assurance for better quality of covering all green building criteria.

First impression is the best impression. In the process of building a green structure many integrated design processes have to be coordinated and any lack of experience by workforce may increase the constraints and delay the work and start a bad word of mouth. Apart from industry being developed, there is crucial need to take the training and development initiatives. Green materials have

to be sourced from selected suppliers as it needs some knowledge about the quality of green products. As the industry is still in an infant phase in India, the materials become scarce sometimes leading to time delays.

Conclusion

Even after GRI's efforts in harmonizing the corporate report format, many companies evade certain reporting parts by claiming that they have environmental management systems. These corporate entities should be scanned by organizations like ISO (International Organization for Standardization). Again this task of monitoring whole lot of companies all over the world is no doubt a cumbersome task. CSR is a meaningful obligation every company owes to the local people, nation and the world. According to (Sameul Idowu Brian A Towler, 2004), CSRR in UK even after stringent rules and regulations imposed, is in an infant phase. If there is no effort made by monitoring organizations around the world to keep vigil on reporting, companies will definitely take advantage of these gaps. When a survey was taken by scholars named Idowu Sameul, Brian A Towler, only 7 companies had stand alone CSR reports out of 17 that are not even fifty percent of the total surveyed companies.

If we can't control environmental degradation with a tool like corporate social responsibility report, then it is said that "Nature often holds up a mirror so we can see more clearly the ongoing processes of growth renewal, and transformation in our lives." A positive initiative can be taken to evangelize the business community to adopt the well planned green building methods by bidding adieu to traditional time consuming anti ecological concrete structures and contribute to the nature's well being. IGBC (Indian green building council) has even decided to rate each building and the ratings are classified as Platinum, Gold, Silver, Certified. Platinum shows highest adherence to the green standards by an entity. IGBC has adopted LEED's four award levels further details can be observed at the websites of IGBC. The Unites states green building council developed LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) program in the year 2000.

The objectives of LEED program as follows:

- To locate the site for building that has least negative impact on environment.
- To save energy and water.
- To enforce usage of environmental friendly materials in the building.
- To aim for providing high-quality internal environment.

Specific points are allocated to different criteria to satisfy green-ship such as sustainable site, water efficiency, points for energy consumption and atmosphere maintenance, materials and resources. Successful adoption of these methods would help environmentally, economically. The depleting water, air and soil resources can be replenished.

India has done a good progress in solid waste management and solar industry has taken a huge leap forward with the country falling in tropic/temperate zone. India will have sunshine throughout the year. The solar energy especially in building designs is used for heating, lighting through well planned ventilation. To boost the indigenous production of solar materials, government of India has invested in projects and many entrepreneurs are looking at this sector as lucrative sector. The private concerns have also invested in manufacturing solar materials. Still certain important parts are imported from foreign countries for eg: Solar wafers. Government has announced IT (Income tax) benefits for solar energy users and large amount of households use solar energy for heating and lighting purpose as electricity charges are becoming dearer. The electron tubes manufacturing is expected to grow by creating $15.5 billion semiconductor market by the year 2015. We have seen many green products, classifications, methods but there is a need to handle these things with care. The green products are totally friendly while functioning but the organizations should keep certain issues in mind such as methane emissions etc. The green products in the process of manufacturing emits harmful wastes and when they are not de-commissioned in a proper way they may become hazardous to the environment by giving a black mark to the green initiative. Their disposal should be taken care. Failure to do so results in reduction of value, purpose and green home methods.

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