Cuban Journal of Public and Business Administration
ISSN 2664-0856 RNPS 2458 / Vol. 10 (2026) / e401
Available in: https://apye.esceg.cu/index.php/apye/article/view/401

Original article

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AS A MANAGEMENT GUIDELINE: A VIEW FROM RUSSIA

EL DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE COMO GUÍA DE GESTIÓN: UNA PERSPECTIVA DESDE RUSIA

Dmitry Novik https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5278-5557

Presidential Academy (RANEPA) in St.Petersurg, Russia
novik-dg@ranepa.ru

Corresponding author: novik-dg@ranepa.ru

JEL Classification: Q01, H83

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23889525

Received: 28/09/2026
Accepted: 29/10/2026

Abstract

The article discusses the role of sustainable development ideas in managerial practices, specifically public administration and challenges that the limited understanding of sustainable development as an idea of formal adherence to specific outside principles may pose. The article argues that for a state being under external political pressure, although presenting a challenge, offers an opportunity to build a sustainable development system not only fitting this state's needs, but also conforming to the core ideas of the sustainable development concept to a far greater extent than mere following popular ideas. The article discusses the Russia's efforts in this sphere and argues that Russia's sustainable development system is being built around the core ideas of sustainability. Russian approach towards sustainable development sees it as a managerial task, a project of sort with the required legal framework, resources and administrative efforts. On all these levels the arrangements provide for a quite resilient system.

Keywords: sustainable development, management, Russian experience, SDG, ESG

Resumen

El artículo analiza el papel de las ideas de desarrollo sostenible en las prácticas de gestión, específicamente en la administración pública y los desafíos que puede plantear la comprensión limitada

This is an open access article licensed CC BY-NC 4.0
[https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/]

del desarrollo sostenible como una idea de adhesión formal a principios externos específicos. El artículo argumenta que un Estado bajo presión política externa, aunque presenta un desafío, ofrece una oportunidad para construir un sistema de desarrollo sostenible que no solo se ajuste a las necesidades de este Estado, sino que también se ajuste a las ideas centrales del concepto de desarrollo sostenible en un grado mucho mayor que el mero seguimiento de las ideas populares. El artículo analiza los esfuerzos de Rusia en esta esfera y argumenta que el sistema de desarrollo sostenible de Rusia se está construyendo en torno a las ideas centrales de la sostenibilidad. El enfoque ruso hacia el desarrollo sostenible lo ve como una tarea gerencial, un proyecto de tipo con el marco legal, los recursos y los esfuerzos administrativos requeridos. En todos estos niveles, las disposiciones proporcionan un sistema bastante resiliente.

Palabras clave: desarrollo sostenible, gestión, experiencia Rusa, ODS, ESG

Introduction

Over the past few decades, the ideas of sustainable development have in one way or another permeated virtually every sphere of life of the state and society. In some cases, this process happens organically; in others, certain components of those ideas are imposed from the outside, changing the established framework and often distorting their own content.

It is known that the concept of sustainable development represents an ideology of balance between the interests of current and future generations. However, in seeking to resolve this primarily moral and ethical dilemma, it gives rise to new ones. The variability in the application of the principles of sustainable development disrupts its inherent basic balance; moreover, the concept itself, as noted by Sh. Yamada and co-authors, is full of contradictions in approaches and required actions (or inaction).[1]

This article aims to focus on the management aspects of the concept of sustainable development without delving into philosophical and ethical debates. The Russian approach to sustainable development is discussed, including managerial aspects, the draft legal framework, resources, and administrative efforts required for a resilient system; these requirements are addressed in the article.

Materials and Methods

The idea of sustainability can be considered a key guiding principle for management activities, as it provides for the construction of a system (primarily socio-economic) that is not only effective in the short term but also capable of continuing to exist and maintain acceptable living conditions (and other parameters as well) in the long term.

However, the understanding of sustainable development that has taken root in modern society is largely focused on a specific set of characteristics and benchmarks, compliance with which becomes an important external attribute of a “civilized” society. It’s no wonder that many people associate the phrase “sustainable development” exclusively with the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN for the period 2015–2030 or with just environmental preservation.[2]

The SDGs are not to be underestimated, as they constitute a crucial reference point and, at the same time, represent a very flexible tool to achieve that same sustainability over time. Nevertheless, their main strength lies in their flexibility and adaptability to the specific situation of each country or region. Therefore, a narrow understanding of sustainable development as adherence to the SDGs (and other well-known concepts such as ESG) without differentiating priorities within them can be considered harmful from the perspective of achieving true sustainability. At the same time, the very idea of adhering to the SDGs and ESG has largely become a kind of external indicator of compliance, some sort of "a pass to a club".

In this regard, states under external pressure (such as Cuba and Russia) find themselves in a unique position. On the one hand, external restrictions and political tensions reduce overall sustainability and hinder the implementation of national development priorities eg. due to the simple reduction of available resources. On the other hand, this situation allows the country to avoid having to conform to some external framework and to focus on achieving truly significant indicators and developing a relevant strategy, based on its own specific characteristics.

It can be said with confidence that such a transition has taken place in Russia. The ideas of sustainable development have been integrated into national development strategies and management practices. It is important to emphasize once again that those are fully aligned with the original idea of the UN SDGs that are supposed to be integrated into national strategies.[3]

On May 7, 2024, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, issued a decree "On the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 and for the long term up to 2036."[4] It is structured in a manner similar to the SDGs outlining 7 goals and 83 objectives and indicators for achieving them, defines the main measures, and identifies the responsible parties.

At the same time, the definition of national goals and indicators does not contradict the implementation of the global agenda. In 2025, at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of ECOSOC, the Special Representative of the President of Russia noted that Russia is demonstrating progress on 61% of the SDG indicators, with poverty reduced by 1.5 times, women holding 48.8% of leadership positions, and the share of low-carbon generation (including gas and nuclear energy) reaching 87%.[5]

Results

In the context of sustainable development management, as in many other areas, the architecture is built around three levels: regulatory, institutional, and resource-based. At the regulatory level, as early as 1996 (just 4 years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro), a decree of the President of the Russian Federation enacted the Concept for the Transition of the Russian Federation to Sustainable Development,[6] which, among other things, identified the creation of a regulatory and legal framework for the transition to sustainable development as the first of the main directions of this transition.

Subsequently, a significant body of regulatory and legal acts at various levels was adopted in the areas of environmental protection, building a sustainable economic system, and the harmonious development of social relations. It is worth noting separately the 2014 state program "Environmental Protection" with

amendments made in 2025 and 2026,[7] and Federal Law No. 296-FZ (2021) "On Limiting Greenhouse Gas Emissions".[8]

The institutional level is built around national projects – large-scale state programmes for the development of key areas of society. Currently, the third cycle of their implementation is underway; the first was launched in 2006 and ran until 2018, the second began in 2019 and ended in 2024. In addition to the Government, the Council under the President of the Russian Federation for Strategic Development and National Projects is responsible for coordinating their implementation.

The resource support for achieving national development goals is based on the financing of national projects, which, in turn, coordinate the financing of individual types of activities. By Resolution No. 1587 of the Government dated September 21, 2021, "On the Approval of Criteria for Sustainable (including Green) Development Projects in the Russian Federation and Requirements for the Verification System for Sustainable Development Financing Instruments in the Russian Federation",[9] the criteria for "green" projects, "transition" projects, and social projects have been approved, along with the requirements for their financing instruments and the procedure for verifying whether these instruments meet the established criteria. This way, targeted funding is secured to achieve priority objectives.

The role of the education and science sectors in achieving national objectives in the field of sustainable development should also be briefly mentioned. Universities do not merely train personnel, including management personnel, and they must educate students with due regard for and reliance on best practices in sustainability.

Universities themselves, as significant elements of the socio-economic system, must base their activities on the principles of sustainability and social responsibility, not merely making declarations but taking concrete and measurable steps in this crucial area. This not only makes it possible to address specific tasks in the present moment but also makes a significant contribution to shaping future specialists and managers through concrete examples.

As examples, It can be mentioned, for instance, UrFU, which received a Class A rating in the first Russian ESG university ranking by RAEX,[10] and the Institute of Finance and Sustainable Development at our Presidential Academy, which is recognized by the UN as having the best practices in sustainable development. Sustainability ideas are embedded in the educational programs and university strategies of Russian universities.[11]

Discussion

Therefore, it can be said that the achievement of sustainable development in the Russian Federation is based on specific and measurable indicators and a system for monitoring them, rather than on declarations. At the same time, it can be safely stated that Russia is moving in the main direction. towards achieving the SDGs (in their fundamental understanding).

The global push towards a limited understanding of sustainability as adherence to specific principles with the (sometimes false) moral impetus behind them can be detrimental in the long-term perspective. In this

regard it is vital for the actors not bound by the necessity to conform to continue their efforts towards true sustainability – both in their own interest and the interest of the humanity as a whole.

An approach to achieving sustainable development as a managerial task has proven its worth. Sustainable development in this regard can be seen as another long-term project that requires resources, institutional capacity and regulatory framework in order to be implemented.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth emphasizing once again that the transition to sustainable development is probably the most important task that humanity has to face. The role of sustainable development as a management guideline can be fully realized only when the ideas of sustainability are transformed into national, regional, and organizational strategies with clearly defined responsible parties and measurable indicators, rather than remaining at the level of vague moral responsibility — even if the moral nature of these ideas may be considered primary.

Bibliographic references

1. Yamada S, Kanoi L, Koh V, Lim A, Dove MR. Sustainability as a Moral Discourse: Its Shifting Meanings, Exclusions, and Anxieties. Sustainability 2022; 14, 3095. [consulted 14 september 2026]. Available in: https://doi.org/10.3390/su14053095
2. Clémençon R. Is sustainable development bad for global biodiversity conservation? Global Sustainability. 2021;4:e16. [consulted 15 september 2026]. Available in: https://doi.org.10.1017/sus.2021.14
3. Political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly. Adopted by the UN General Assembly Resolution 74/4. [consulted 19 september 2026]. Available in: https://docs.un.org/A/RES/74/4.
4. Decree of the President of the Russian Federation “On the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030 and for the long term up to 2036” dated May 7th 2024, №309. [consulted 18 september 2026] Available in: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/50542
5. Statement by B.Yu. Titov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Relations with International Organizations to Achieve the SDGs, during the plenary session of the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of ECOSOC [in Russian]. [consulted 19 september 2026] Available in: https://russiaun.ru/ru/news/221072025
6. Decree of the President of the Russian Federation “On the Concept for the Transition of the Russian Federation to Sustainable Development” dated April 1st, 1996, №440. [consulted 19 september 2026]. Available in: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/9120
7. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation dated April 15th, 2014, №. 326 (amended). [consulted 16 september 2026]. Available in: http://government.ru/docs/all/91504/
8. Federal Law “On Limiting Greenhouse Gas Emissions” dated July 2nd, 2021, №. 296-FZ. [consulted 18 september 2026]. Available in: http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202107020031
9. Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation dated September 21st, 2021, № 1587 “On the Approval of Criteria for Sustainable (including Green) Development Projects in the Russian Federation and Requirements for the Verification System for Sustainable Development Financing

Instruments in the Russian Federation". [consulted 18 september 2026]. Available in: http://government.ru/docs/all/136742/.
10. ESG rankings of Russian higher education institutions. RAEX. [consulted 25 september 2026]. Available in: https://raex-rr.com/ESG/ESG_universities/ESG_universities/2026/
11. Institute of Finance and Sustainable Development. Presidential Academy. [consulted 25 september 2026] https://ifur.ranepa.ru/

Conflict of interest:
The author declares no conflict of interest