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BOOK REVIEW

GLOBAL PRACTICES OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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During the last years, Springer Publishing House initiated and committed to publishing books addressing Corporate Social Responsibility. The book reviewed here, *Global Practices of Corporate Social Responsibility* is the first volume in a large project, which comprises a series of books on Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability and Sustainable Developments, and addresses professionals' perspectives, comments, trends and innovative practices and actions.

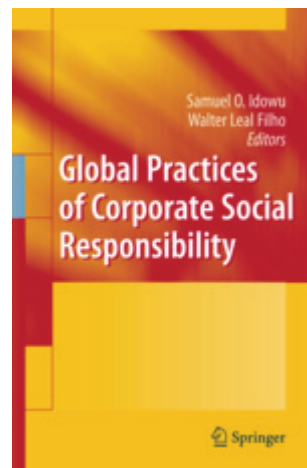
The amazing fact when begin reading the book is the diversity and uniqueness of each chapter, but the homogenous result which is offered to the reader. The book is substantial, divided in five parts and covering CSR's practices in 20 countries around the world, with Part I – Europe: UK, Northern Ireland, France, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Belgium, Greece, Russia; Part II – East Asia: China, Malaysia; Part III – The Americas: USA, Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil; Part IV – Middle East and Africa: Egypt, Turkey, Nigeria, South Africa; and Part V – Australasia: Australia.

What is also wonderful in its uniqueness, is the fact that, writing the assigned chapters, the invited contributors did not met or had preliminary discussions on potential core and frame of ideas, and this is seen in the diversity of views, comments and ideas used in the country chapters. There were no impositions or compulsory tracks to be followed, no attempts to be framed in a common language or conceptual pattern. From an opposite perspective, the book is, by country coverage, undoubtedly incomplete, with a small covering area of CSR's definition.

In addition, it is interesting to mention the time and the years. The contributions were submitted during 2007 and the manuscript was ready to be published in the beginning of 2009. Nevertheless, recalling, during that period, Global Economic Crisis and the Credit Crunch have hit national, international, multinational, and individual companies. Companies changed their ways of acting and, under the high pressure of fast moving pace of events, they revealed where their priorities stand.

It was interesting to be mentioned however arguably, that the companies who have established separate departments to deal with Corporate Social Responsibility, typically linked to marketing, found it easy to cut back on these activities.

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In these times and environments, the book *Global Practices of Corporate Social Responsibility*, as editors argued, tried to gather in a single manuscript evidence, national and international, of CSR actions and facts of corporate entities which are practicing or in the process of implementing and developing the practices of social responsibility.

Along the 21 chapters of the book, answers to the following questions are to be found: Who are the players in the field of CSR? Why have corporate entities suddenly become more moral or ethical? Why is everyone embracing CSR? How are corporate entities in various countries dealing with those issues, which relate to CSR? How are they practicing CSR? Which issues fall under the umbrella of CSR in each of the described countries?

However, invariably, each chapter suggests that being socially responsible by modern corporate entities is no longer an option; it is now a moral and business requirement. The consequences of not being in the line are serious for the entity concerned, its stakeholders, and the environment where it operates.

To assist in the reading of the book, the authors adopted various approaches in describing how corporate entities in the chosen countries are practicing CSR. Titling the chapters to reflect how corporate entities largely view CSR in each particular country, the authors hoped that this action demonstrates to the readers each chapter's individuality.

CSR means different things to different people. This fact explains why the approaches adopted in a particular country are determined by several factors including the social and economic problems it faces at any point in time which require CSR related solutions. Having accepted that CSR is practiced differently across the world, the question, is, how is CSR practiced in China, South Africa, Mexico, Germany, USA or any of the other countries described in the book? The answer is to be found by looking at the results, which authors have reached in their studies of CSR practices in these countries.

The agenda covered by the book is broad, including measures to combat global climate change, HIV AIDS, clean water, and the full set of United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Within the EU, CSR is seen as part of Employment and Social Policy, and involves commitments to Social Dialogue and improved working conditions for employees, who are to be consulted and informed before restructuring or downsizing. In the USA and UK, there is a debate about the responsibilities of corporations regarding payment of taxes, particularly with regard to major banks, which have come into public ownership.

If turning back in time, in 1776, in "The Wealth of Nations", while stating that "prudence" was "of all virtues that which is most helpful to the individual, Adam Smith argued that "humanity, justice, generosity, and public spirit, are the qualities most useful to others". As Amartya Sen mentioned in March 2009, "Adam Smith was deeply concerned about the incidence of poverty, illiteracy and relative deprivation that might remain despite a well functioning market economy".

This suggests that, since the time of Adam Smith, corporate entities should have regarded being socially responsible as "part of their normal business obligations to all their stakeholders, regardless of whether these are primary or secondary shareholders", as the editors of this book put it. It is not too late to start, while the world hopes for a vigorous dialogue.

Samuel O. Idowu

Samuel O. Idowu is a senior lecturer at the city campus of London Metropolitan Business School, London Metropolitan University, where he was course organizer for Accounting Joint degrees and lately, the Course Leader/Personal Academic Adviser (PAA) for students taking Accounting Major/Minor and Accounting Joint degrees. He is a fellow member of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators, a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Chartered Secretaries & Administrators and a named freeman of the City of London. He has published about 31 articles in both professional and academic journals and contributed chapters in edited books. He won one of the Highly Commended Emerald Literati Network Awards for Excellence in 2008. He has been in academia for 20 years.

Walter Leal Filho

Professor Walter Leal Filho has a Ph.D. and a D.Sc. in environmental technology, plus a honorary doctorate (DL) in environmental information. He is the Head of the Research and Transfer Centre “Applications of Life Sciences” at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, where he is in charge of a number of European projects. He has authored, co-authored or edited over 40 books on the subjects of environment, technology and innovation and has in excess of 130 published papers to his credit. Prof. Walter Leal Filho teaches environmental management at many European universities. He is also the editor of the Journal “Management of Environmental Quality” and founding editor of the “International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education” and “Environment and Sustainable Development”.