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MANAGEMENT | REVIEW ARTICLE

Reconceiving corporate social responsibility for business and educational outcomes

Mark Anthony Camilleri^{1,2*}

Abstract: There are win win opportunities for big businesses and policy-makers as they nurture human capital with the right knowledge, skills and competences. A thorough literature review suggests that there is a rationale for corporations to collaborate with national governments and other stakeholders in the provision of education and training. In addition, this paper presents qualitative case studies of numerous exemplary firms that have distinguished themselves for their responsible behaviours, particularly towards their human resources and prospective employees. The findings indicate that there is scope for businesses to engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives through the provision of educational programmes and continuous professional training and development of workers. Very often, these businesses' underlying objective is to improve their employees' competences, whilst minimising the skill gaps and mismatches in the labour market. In conclusion, this inquiry posits that CSR and stakeholder engagement could boost the employees' morale and job satisfaction, which may in turn lead to lower staff turnover rates and greater productivity levels in workplace environments. It implies that there is potential for the organisational cultures and their business ethos to become more attuned with the governments' educational policies; in order to better respond to the diverse needs of today's learners and tomorrow's human resources.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Anthony Camilleri is a resident academic in the Department of Corporate Communication at the University of Malta. He lectures marketing-related subjects in an international master's programme run by the University of Malta in collaboration with King's College, University of London. Mark Camilleri is a PhD graduate from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. He taught business subjects at graduate and post-graduate levels in Hong Kong, Malta and the UK. His current research interests include corporate social responsibility, stakeholder engagement, sustainable tourism and creating shared value. Camilleri is a frequent speaker and reviewer at the American Marketing Association's (AMA) Marketing and Public Policy annual conference. He has published papers in *Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal*, *Corporate Reputation Review*, *Tourism Planning and Development*, *Tourism and Hospitality Research* and the *International Journal of Leadership in Education* as well as in the proceedings of AMA Conferences.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This paper reports on socially responsible practices of some of the most popular global corporations. These businesses are increasingly engaging with their human resources and prospective employees through the provision of education and continuous professional training. This contribution suggests that there are win win opportunities for both corporations and policy-makers in education when they nurture human capital in the labour market. It contends that corporate social responsibility can be redirected towards human resources to boost the employees' morale and job satisfaction. Continuous professional development and the training of staff will in turn lead to lower turnover rates and greater productivity levels in workplace environments.

Subjects: Corporate Social Responsibility; Human Resource Management; Strategic Management

Keywords: CSR; corporate social responsibility; education; educational outcomes; human resources management; training; creating shared value; educational programmes; strategic CSR; social capital

1. Introduction

During their learning journey, individuals acquire competences that ought to be relevant for their career endeavours. The provision of quality education and its assurance is the responsibility of national governments. Yet, business and industry also offer training to human resources that supplements formal education (Hallier & Butts, 1999; McKenzie & Woodruff, 2013; Reichheld, 1992). Very often, policy-makers are expected to respond to challenging issues such as skill shortages and mismatches where candidates lack certain competencies although they could have attended compulsory education (Allen & De Weert, 2007). Arguably, the employees' knowledge and skills may be too deep to bridge through corporate training sessions. The constraints on their growth may be halted by the broad impact of inadequate education and training in some industries or regions (Finegold & Soskice, 1988). On the other hand, corporations can easily shift their operations where it is viable for them to tap qualified employees.

In this light, this paper contends that there is a possibility that big businesses could become key players in addressing unmet needs in education. Several companies have the resources and the political influence to help improve curricula and their educational outcomes; which will in turn help them cultivate local talent. This contribution shows how leading businesses are already devising corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes that are actively supporting education across many contexts (Lauring & Thomsen, 2008; Preuss, Haunschild, & Matten, 2009). It reconceives the private sector's role in education as there are win win opportunities for companies and national governments whenever they nurture human capital. These stakeholders could create synergistic value for both business and society. Such a strategic approach may result in cross-sector collaborations that will inevitably lead to significant improvements in the firms' bottom lines (Pearce & Doh, 2012; Porter & Kramer, 2011). Notwithstanding, the businesses' involvement in setting curricula may also help them improve the effectiveness of learning outcomes (Azevedo, Apfelthaler, & Hurst, 2012; Seethamraju, 2012). Indeed, businesses could become key stakeholders in aligning educational programmes with their human capital requirements in the labour market (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Van Buren & Greenwood, 2011; Walker & Black, 2000). There is a possibility that their CSR programmes could reconnect their economic success with societal progress.

2. The objectives of this research

Firstly, previous theoretical underpinnings and empirical studies indicate that organisations that care about their social impact will reap the benefits of an improved employee engagement in their workplace environments, though increased motivation and higher morale, job satisfaction, lower turnover rates and enhanced productivity.

In the second part of this paper, numerous case studies reveal that there is scope for corporations to forge fruitful relationships with educational institutions, governments and non-profits. This contribution shows that an increased collaboration with these stakeholders could help to better align education with the unmet training needs of business and industry. It posits that socially responsible businesses could lead educators to address relevant job mismatches and skill gaps in the labour market.

Thirdly, this contribution implies that big businesses could help improve the much desired standards for educational effectiveness across borders. Numerous cases provide evidence on how corporate philanthropy, stewardship and laudable investments in the realms of education could create shared value to both business and society (Camilleri, 2013, 2015).

3. Literature review

3.1. Redirecting CSR efforts towards human resources

Today's cause marketing is often concerned with the company's strongest ambassadors—its employees (Kotler & Lee, 2008). Undoubtedly, responsible and sustainable businesses are increasingly contributing to the well-being of their human resources and towards their surrounding communities (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). At the same time, firms often engage in CSR activities to generate publicity and positive impressions among stakeholders (Jahdi & Acikdilli, 2009; Visser, 2011). Many academics argue that the most successful CSR strategy is to align a company's social and environmental activities with its business purpose and values (Porter & Kramer, 2011; Visser, 2011). Arguably, the first step towards developing a CSR mentality is to redefine the principles of the company. In a way, the role of senior management is crucial in instilling an ethos for CSR behaviours among employees (Lauring & Thomsen, 2008; Preuss et al., 2009).

Businesses know that prospective employees consider a variety of factors when they evaluate future careers. Some individuals value financial incentives; including high salaries, bonus potential and benefits (Bloom & Milkovich, 1998; Gerhart & Fang, 2014). Others focus on professional development, advancement opportunities and location (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kehoe & Wright, 2013). Recently, multinational companies are increasingly realising that they can better engage with their employees through CSR (Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschun, 2008). Evidently, CSR can provide certain incentives (to employees) that may be even more alluring than money (Branco & Rodrigues, 2006). Socially responsible Human Resources Management (HRM) affects the employees' performance and their altruistic behaviours (Korschun, Bhattacharya, & Swain, 2014; Shen & Benson, 2014). In fact, past empirical studies indicated that internal CSR engagement that is directed towards employees is an indirect predictor of individual task performance and extra-role helping behaviour. Another study by Deloitte (2004) has yielded very similar results. Seventy-two per cent of US respondents indicated that they would opt to work for companies that also support charitable causes, if they had to choose between jobs offering the same location, job description, pay and benefits. According to this study, the majority of the youngest survey participants have indicated that their decision to work for their current employer was based on company culture or reputation (Deloitte, 2004; Pfeffer, 2007). Evidently, these respondents also valued the opportunities for growth and development, as well as their salary and benefits package. This Deloitte study has shown that the CSR agenda is an important subject for tomorrow's business leaders. These findings seem to suggest that employees want to belong to an organisation that stands for more than financial performance (Korschun et al., 2014; Tang, Hull, & Rothenberg, 2012; Vanhamme, Lindgreen, Reast, & van Popering, 2012). Employees are attracted by companies that are truly CSR-oriented. In addition, the businesses' genuine intentions and goodwill can help to improve the brands' image among stakeholders. Thus, even if employees do participate in CSR initiatives, they still want to be associated with organisations that care about their social impact (Shen & Benson, 2014). Therefore, it is in the companies' self-interest to underline their CSR performance during public relations events that are aimed to attract top talent. Apparently, more companies are realising that CSR is a great opportunity to engage with employees and to illustrate their commitment to the community at large.

Past empirical studies have measured both the employees' attitudes and work behaviours of those who actively participated in their respective companies' CSR programmes. Many findings indicate that the employees that were actively taking part in charitable causes and philanthropic initiatives felt a sense of identification with their respective companies (Kotler & Lee, 2008; Vanhamme et al., 2012). Interestingly, other studies have reported that corporate social performance was also correlated to an improved job performance (Tang et al., 2012). Therefore, it transpired that those employees that were emotionally connected with their company were more likely to remain committed towards their employer. It may appear that the CSR initiatives often reveal the companies' underlying credentials. Hence, social responsibility can be considered as part of the employees' value proposition (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). Such a proposition can be described as the balance of benefits that employees receive in return for their performance at work (Korschun et al., 2014). Moreover, the

employment value proposition can also be a plausible way for companies to retain their employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004); as CSR can help to augment the employers' reputation and image for job prospects (Kiessling, Isaksson, & Yasar, *in press*; Melo & Garrido-Morgado, 2012). Interestingly, relevant research suggests that when the job candidates' values match those of their employer, they would feel more satisfied in their prospective job (Korschun et al., 2014). It will be very likely that they remain longer with their employer.

Another survey had also mirrored these findings. It found that the employees engagement in CSR have led to a sense of pride in the company (De Roeck & Delobbe, 2012). This was in turn positively correlated to employee performance (Bučiūnienė & Kazlauskaitė, 2012; Singhapakdi, Lee, Sirgy, & Senasu, 2015) and negatively related to intention to quit (Ghosh & Gurunathan, 2014). Moreover, other findings indicated that employee engagement was also positively related to customer focus and pro-company citizenship behaviours (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). Those companies that possess high CSR credibility often experience a lower turnover rate than their competing firms (Lee, Park, & Lee, 2013). Curiously, the companies that pride themselves in experiencing the highest retention of employees will also have the greatest customer retention (Harter et al., 2002). Such findings could possibly be attributed to many issues. For instance, the employees' CSR engagement could also be connected with their leaders' CSR ethos (Fombrun, 2005). Therefore, management could be considered as the main actors and drivers for socially responsible behaviours (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007). Many studies have indicated that the managements' values and beliefs will inevitably effect employee engagement in CSR as well as their companies' competitiveness. For example, Jenkins (2006) posited that employees looked up to their senior management as they championed CSR issues. Similarly, Entine (2003) argued that corporations are continuously judged on how employees are treated. Brammer, Millington, and Rayton (2007) suggested that external CSR is positively related to organisational commitment and that the contribution of CSR to employee morale and commitment is as great as job satisfaction (Fida et al., 2014). Undoubtedly, the CSR initiatives will affect an organisation's human environment within any organisation (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

Corporate sustainability and responsibility initiatives can be a possible reason why prospective employees decide to join and remain at a particular company. The businesses that are socially responsible with their human resources are noticing an improved job satisfaction and higher morale among employees (Fida et al., 2014). A major concern in many industry sectors is attracting quality employees and their retention. Davidson, Timo, and Wang (2010) noted that because of high staff turnover rates in the hospitality industry, there was an increased pressure for ongoing training to maintain the highest levels of service at all times. For these reasons, organisations ought to recognise the effect of CSR on employee recruitment and retention. Googins, Mirvis, and Rochlin (2007) maintained that companies need to engage their people not simply as employees, but rather in their multiple identities as workers, parents, community members, consumers, investors and co-inhabitants of the planet. Lately, many employers are becoming more sensitive to the work-life balance of their human resources (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). The personal circumstances of employees may demand flexible working times or reduced working hours. For instance, employees may need to look after their children or to family members in need of care. Notwithstanding, employees could ask for sponsorships to pursue professional training courses (McKenzie & Woodruff, 2013). Their studies often necessitate their temporary absence from work. Unfortunately, the work-life balance may not always be a viable option for businesses. Due to the particular nature of work across many industries, the employees may be required to work unsocial hours.

Burke and Logsdon (1996) noted that employees indicated that the CSR programmes were most effective in organisations that hailed from environmental and energy or utility sectors. However, they also suggested that the government, retail and technology organisations were laggards in this regard (Brighter Planet, 2010; UNEP, 2011). The environmental organisations tend to have a highly competent workforce on green issues as these employees are usually knowledgeable on sustainability innovations (Renwick, Redman, & Maguire, 2013). Whereas, the government and manufacturing workers seem to possess lower green credentials (Renwick et al., 2013). Hence, the nature of the

industry could dictate how companies champion their CSR issues (Jamali, El Dirani, & Harwood, 2015; Jenkins, 2006). For instance, energy and utility organisations tend to be the most frequent promoters of energy conservation, and the manufacturing businesses are usually renowned for their engagement in reusing, reducing and recycling resources.

The size of a company could possibly affect the employees' engagement in CSR practices (Baumann-Pauly, Wickert, Spence, & Scherer, 2013; Orlitzky, Siegel, & Waldman, 2011). Surprisingly, the smaller organisations are increasingly promoting the use of sustainable actions (Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Jeppesen, 2015). Several studies suggest that both large and small businesses are equally effective in their CSR engagement (Jenkins, 2006). However, Nielsen and Thomsen (2009) held that the internal communications may be uniquely important to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that frequently do not afford significant PR budgets to communicate externally. Moreover, CSR engagement may prove the most challenging among businesses with diverse cultures and complex supply chain networks (Ciliberti, Pontrandolfo, & Scozzi, 2008). Some of the smaller companies may have less bargaining power to persuade their suppliers to alter their sustainable and socially responsible practices. Sometimes, employees are inspired to implement given initiatives at their own homes. Another aspect is the businesses' responsibility in managing the safety and well-being of staff within their premises (Carroll, 1999; Cornelius, Todres, Janjuha-Jivraj, Woods, & Wallace, 2008). Generally, many multinational organisations may have made suitable arrangements for health, safety and welfare issues, as big businesses are expected to comply with the relevant national legislations in this regard. It is the corporation's responsibility to ensure that the workplace environment complies with the relevant laws, rules and regulations. Very often, the multinational organisations appear to behave responsibly. The majority of them adhere to ethical norms and internationally recognised standards that are monitored and controlled by third parties.

Management may also engage with employees as they can involve them on the companies' different issues, including CSR. When the human resources are delegated with certain duties and responsibilities, they may become motivated in their workplace environment (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Continuous communication and dialogue with employees are some of the key elements for a successful workplace (Camilleri, 2015). Generally, businesses can get more from their staff in terms of ideas, commitment and loyalty (Bhattacharya et al., 2008; Reichheld, 1992). In a sense, CSR can create a good working atmosphere, where there are better relationships and trust through internal participation, motivation and high spirits (Jenkins, 2006; Preuss et al., 2009). In a similar vein, Pedersen (2010) remarked that managers need to express their broader responsibilities in treating employees with dignity and respect as they strive to stimulate an inspiring, fun and dynamic workplace. Indeed, CSR has the potential to instil 'a sense of belonging' among employees (Murillo & Lozano, 2006). Hence, certain employers could offer incentives and employee reward schemes which are aimed at boosting their employees' productivity (Gerhart & Fang, 2014). Such initiatives can nurture greater employee commitment and motivation (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 2011). Therefore, engagement with employees is not necessarily acquired through financial compensation. Companies are no longer assuming that salaries and financial benefits alone will buy employee commitment (Herzberg et al., 2011).

Companies should address their employees' inherent needs including; self-esteem, self-development and work-life integration. Bhattacharya et al. (2008) held that the businesses' CSR initiatives are an effective means to meet these emotional needs. They argued that CSR humanises the company in ways that other facets of the job cannot. In their words, a pay cheque may keep individuals on the job, but it will not keep a person on the job (in an emotional sense). Furthermore, it is in the interest of the businesses themselves to be mindful of employees who may be expecting far more than salary and benefits from their employers. Today's businesses ought to discover ways how to engage with employees' in order to increase their loyalty (Bhattacharya et al., 2008). For instance, the employers could identify segment-specific needs for their human resources in the same way that they use "benefit segmentation" to target customers (Arineli & Quintella, 2015; Moroko & Uncles, 2009). Many businesses are striving to differentiate themselves by looking after the human

element (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Very often, their focus is to improve the human resources' competencies by organising continuous professional development and on-the-job training sessions and courses to all employees (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Hallier & Butts, 1999; McKenzie & Woodruff, 2013). Relevant courses may obviously help to improve the businesses' performance levels. Evidently, considerable financial and human resources are being devoted to train employees to perform at the required service levels. The larger businesses are often delivering education and training programmes about their environmental awareness and sustainable development practices along with other operational courses and training.

4. Methodology

This empirical investigation presents number cases that are integrated with extant theoretical underpinnings on the subject of CSR vis-a-vis educational programmes. Case studies allowed the researcher to ask what, how and why a phenomenon is the way it is (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2009). Such broad goals are often the beginning of more discrete aims of description, exploration and explanation. These qualitative case studies consist of an inquiry of data that is context dependent (Yin, 2009). In fact, this paper investigates multiple cases of corporations who deliver professional or vocational education and training opportunities to prospective employees in a real-life setting. These cases call for a further process of careful reflection, as new socially responsible HRM ideas are increasingly integrated into corporate thinking. Therefore, this paper reports on exemplary businesses' behaviours as it evaluates how they bring societal progress and advancement.

The qualitative nature of case study methodology seems to generate hypotheses (Yin, 2009). Yet, case studies do not necessarily generalise the findings as they do not always lead to theory development in the same way as natural science data (Flyvbjerg, 2006). However, this study has adopted a pragmatist perspective. It advances knowledge that is derived from different case studies and reports comparable findings (Yin, 2009). The short case studies shed light on the corporations' responsible initiatives in the realms of global education. This research involved a critical process of engagement as it illustrated the big businesses' laudable behaviours across different industry sectors.

A new form of knowledge and discovery has emerged through the deliberation of the following case studies. This qualitative research has provided a conceptual insight that develops new theory and instrumental utility in order to influence corporate action in setting educational policy and curriculum programmes.

5. Case studies of the corporations' engagement in education

5.1. Linking CSR with educational needs

Businesses and governments play essential roles in overcoming regional skill gaps and skill mismatches (Allen & De Weert, 2007). However, they rarely engage with each other in meaningful ways. Businesses that transcend these matters can make a profound impact on their own human resource needs and on their wider societal needs of the region. There is an opportunity for corporations to build regional collaborations with educational institutions, governments and non-profits. These fruitful relationships could address unemployment and competitiveness issues (Gibb, 1993). All this is also consonant with the notion of shared value (Porter & Kramer, 2011). This perspective is a management strategy that could bring corporate financial performance (Tang et al., 2012). Businesses can engage themselves in philanthropic causes and stewardship principles to unleash shared value for business and towards society (Kanter, 1999; Porter & Kramer, 2006, 2011,). Arguably, companies can employ philanthropy to complement their long-term corporate sustainability and responsibility (Visser, 2011). Business could allocate scarce resources to educational and training institutions in order to strengthen their long-term workforce needs (Hallier & Butts, 1999). Nowadays, there are many successful collaborative agreements involving corporations and government.

The New Employment Opportunities (NEO) Initiative consisted of five of Latin America's leading employers, including Walmart, Caterpillar, Microsoft, CEMEX and McDonalds (FSG, 2014). These

corporations have joined forces with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the International Youth Foundation (IYF) with the underlying objective to train one million youth in Latin America and the Caribbean, by 2022 (FSG, 2014). Across the region today, 32 million young people (one in every five aged 15–29) are neither in employment nor at school. Half of the employers in this region struggle to find qualified employees. Evidently, this NEO initiative has already helped to address these crises by launching large-scale training programmes that include technical and life skills, internships and job placement services.

NEO's founding partners have jointly committed \$37 million in cash and in-kind resources. Every company has contributed \$5 million, and provided technical expertise on workforce needs, internships and entry-level jobs for programme graduates (FSG, 2014). IDB and IYF have also been key brokers of this initiative, as they worked with companies to define common job competencies. It transpired that they engaged more than 300 training partners. As a result of their collective effort, these companies have benefited from a new talent pool that has addressed their labour requirements. By working together, the NEO's partners have created a more robust and cost-effective training and placement programme than any business could build by itself. Such conventional programmes could strengthen the employees' skills and training requirements (Allen & De Weert, 2007). Many companies are increasingly organising CSR initiatives that create business and societal value (Porter & Kramer, 2011). They align their CSR programmes with employee competencies in order to build internal capacity and resource pools. The creations of these systems could better connect education to employment as curriculum programmes become aligned with labour market needs (Gibb, 1993; Walker & Black, 2000). Arguably, it is in the companies' self-interest to forge relationships with educators in order to develop and deliver relevant curricula that could extend far beyond isolated workforce development programmes.

Cisco, a provider of networking equipment, has created more than 10,000 networking academies across 165 countries (Camilleri, 2014). More than 4.75 million individuals have improved their employment prospects as they attended training to become network administrators. At the same time, these individuals have increased the demand for Cisco's equipment. Similarly, SAP and Verizon have partnered with local universities and education institutions in order to deliver courses, career coaching and customised degrees on site for employees (Camilleri, 2014). These companies have discovered that employees that pursue such programmes are more likely to remain loyal to their company. Naturally, employees realise that these educational programmes may ultimately lead to their career progression and better prospects for them (Kehoe & Wright, 2013). Evidently, such laudable behaviours are being taken on board by numerous multinational corporations. For instance, another multinational corporation, Intel has invested in training programmes and partnerships that also strengthen education (Camilleri, 2014). The company has recognised that its business growth is constrained by a chronic shortage of talent in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) disciplines. Through programmes like Intel Math and Intel Teach, the global company has delivered instructional materials, online resources and professional development tools for hundreds of thousands of educators across the United States. As a result, many students' have acquired STEM and other 21st-century skills, including critical thinking with data, as well as scientific inquiry. This is a relevant example of a corporate business that has successfully addressed its workforce needs. Intel has recognised specific skill gaps in its central areas like technology and engineering (Camilleri, 2014). Intel has committed itself for further discretionary investments in education. The company has created higher education curricula in demand areas like microelectronics, nanotechnology, security systems and entrepreneurship. Undoubtedly, Intel's efforts affected millions of US students (Camilleri, 2014) as the company has increased its productivity and competitiveness. In a similar vein, SAP employs people with autism in technology-focused roles. In doing so, SAP concentrates on these individuals' unique strengths. This way, the company can gain access to a wider pool of untapped talent that will help to foster a climate of creativity and innovation.

In addition, there are many big businesses that contribute in stewardship, charitable and philanthropic causes (Vanhamme et al., 2012). In the past, the GE Foundation has supported systemic

improvements in urban school districts that were close to GE's business. These investments have surely helped to close the interplay between corporate sustainability and responsibility and corporate philanthropy (Kanter, 1999; Porter & Kramer, 2002), while strengthening GE's long-term talent pipeline. Many NGOs are capable of developing better connections between education and employment. In Africa, the Rockefeller Foundation has invested \$100 million in its Digital Jobs Africa initiative to connect one million disadvantaged youth with jobs in the growing technology sector (Rodin & Lore, 2013). Equally important, the Foundation has acted as a neutral broker by convening the private sector and government to create long-term partnerships and new pathways to employment. NGOs play an essential role in helping companies implement shared value initiatives (Camilleri, 2013; Porter & Kramer, 2011). When companies enter new markets, NGOs can help them understand the local needs and context. They can also help implement educational programs in circumstances where normal corporate profit margins are unattainable. In turn, NGOs that adopt a shared value approach can access the full range of business resources and expertise beyond philanthropy to better serve their constituents (Kanter, 1999; Porter & Kramer, 2002). For example, Education for Employment (EFE) has partnered with companies in the Middle East and North Africa. Since 2006, EFE has provided job training and placement for more than 10,000 unemployed youth; nearly half of whom were women (FSG, 2014; Rockefeller Foundation, 2013). EFE has partnered with companies to help them fill their talent needs.

5.2. The relationship between CSR and stakeholder engagement

Recently, there was an increase in traditional forms of employee volunteerism as a plausible avenue for CSR engagement (Peloza, Hudson, & Hassay, 2009). Very often, some corporate programmes could lead to more employee volunteerism when employees are off from work. Recently, BCCC (2015) noted that companies are increasingly tying their employee volunteer and corporate giving programmes to their business strategy. As a result, businesses have prioritised certain community involvement projects, including K12 education, youth programmes and health and wellness programmes among other priorities (BCCC, 2015). These social issues have featured as the top causes for businesses, as evidenced in Table 1.

Table 1. Top social issues addresses through community involvement efforts

| | |
|----|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | K-12 education |
| 2 | Youth programmes |
| 3 | Health and wellness |
| 4 | STEM training and education |
| 5 | Community economic development |
| 6 | Hunger and food security |
| 7 | Higher education |
| 8 | Disaster relief |
| 9 | Arts and culture |
| 10 | Low income housing |
| 11 | Non communicable diseases |
| 12 | Financial literacy |
| 13 | Work readiness |
| 14 | Diversity and inclusion |
| 15 | Small business and entrepreneurship |
| 16 | Gender equality |
| 17 | Technology access |
| 18 | Water |
| 19 | Communicable diseases |

Source: BCCC (2015, p. 14).

Several corporations, including Charles Schwab, Dell, General Mills, Google, Hewlett Packard, Johnson & Johnson, Medtronic, Merrill Lynch, Nationwide, REI and Target, had partnered with VolunteerMatch, a national online volunteer matching service that help employees find volunteer opportunities in their neighbourhoods (Volunteer Match, 2007). It transpired that many of these multinational firms have brought volunteering within their facilities (Peloza et al., 2009). Timberland had even inaugurated an in-house day care centre. This company maintained that CSR is inextricably linked to the company's core business. Other businesses have also initiated volunteering programmes that involved the utilisation of their employees' skills and competences. For example, Deloitte created IMPACT Day, where the company dedicated a day in a year to carry out community service. Deloitte maintained that its professionals engage themselves in skill-based projects (Deloitte, 2015). Its employees have applied their expertise in mentorship, consulting and business issues. Moreover, the international audit firm also claimed they it has created valuable societal opportunities based on individual skill development. Skill-based CSR allow employees to volunteer and make a difference in their communities (Allen & De Weert, 2007). Nonetheless, it also provides them with numerous opportunities to practice the precise skill sets that are needed in their workplace.

In a similar vein, IBM's Corporate Service Corps had serviced NGOs in some emerging markets. Past projects have included many assessments on product effectiveness and developing marketing plans for their Romanian clients. Moreover, IBM's Corporate Service Corps had also analysed supply chains in Ghana and developed business plans and financial management strategies for the Wildlife Foundation in Arusha, Tanzania (FSG, 2014; Volunteer Match, 2007). Evidently, many employee volunteering programmes are instilling knowledge, skills and competences among vulnerable people in society, particularly the young unemployed individuals. It may appear that it makes more sense to teach these young persons to do something than to finance them. Various companies are aware that the younger employees' perceptions of CSR are an incredibly important consideration for their corporate reputation and standing. Arguably, young adults and adolescents seek more responsibility and advancement opportunities (Hunt & Michael, 1983). Generally, they are eager to work with and learn from older mentors. It may appear that they prioritise such qualities over job security (Herzberg et al., 2011).

These socially responsible initiatives demand a common framework that enables companies, governments, multilaterals, private foundations and NGOs to combine their different strengths in mutually reinforcing ways (Camilleri, 2014; Porter & Kramer, 2011). Yet just as shared value could necessitate a mindset shift for companies, it also requires other stakeholders to think differently. Of course, national governments are responsible for the provision of education. It sets curricula and learning outcomes for students. Yet, education could establish certain incentives that may encourage businesses to participate in educational programmes where they could be rewarded for their valuable engagement (Breznitz & Feldman, 2012). This may possibly require the governments to adopt a proactive stance in redefining quality, strengthen their assessment methods as well as data collection systems (Camilleri, 2014). The educational objectives will inevitably vary across different jurisdictions and these are based on certain socio-economic, cultural and ideological factors. However, the educational outcomes ought to instil knowledge, skills and competencies in students that are needed for their individual development, civic participation and gainful employment (Herzberg et al., 2011).

At present, there are many global initiatives that are aimed at aligning learning measures across countries. However, further effort is needed to create the much desired standards for educational and training effectiveness. Corporate philanthropic funding can possibly encourage incentives and promote laudable investments in education and training (Camilleri, 2014; Porter & Kramer, 2002). In addition, the World Economic Forum's (WEF) big businesses as well as the philanthropic funders can also help to forge stakeholder relationships among businesses, educators, policy-makers and the civil society.

6. Conclusions and implications

This contribution maintains that it is in the private sector's interest to actively participate in reconceiving education for societal wellbeing. It posits that there are win win opportunities for companies and national governments as they cultivate human capital. Indeed, companies can create synergistic value for both business and society. Such a strategic approach can result in new business models and cross-sector collaborations that will inevitably lead to operational efficiencies, cost savings and significant improvements to the firms' bottom lines. The CSR initiatives in education can also help organisations to improve the recruitment and retention of talented employees. This paper has reported that employees want to be part of organisations that genuinely demonstrate their concern for society. There was mention of strategic philanthropic initiatives that manifest corporate behaviours that also satisfy much of the stakeholders' aspirations. Organisations can always make use effective CSR communications to attract the best employees and talent pool from the labour market. Ideally, businesses ought to treat employees as internal customers as it is critical for their long-term success. In a sense, the organisational culture and its commitment for CSR engagement can play an integral role, in this regard. In fact, CSR and environment sustainability issues are increasingly becoming ubiquitous practices in different contexts, particularly for the youngest workforce.

This research indicated that there is a business case for corporate sustainable and responsible behaviours. Besides, minimising staff turnover, CSR may lead to systematic benefits including employee productivity, corporate reputation and operational efficiencies. This implies that CSR is an antecedent for an optimal financial performance (towards achieving profitability, increasing sales, return on investment et cetera). At the same time, the businesses' CSR engagement could create significant value to society as well. The corporations' involvement in setting curricula and relevant course programmes may also help to improve the effectiveness of education systems across many contexts. It is imperative that businesses become key stakeholders in the provision of education and training. There is a possibility that CSR programmes could reconnect the businesses' economic success with societal progress. Proactive companies who engage in strategic CSR behaviours could uncover new business opportunities (Lauring & Thomsen, 2008) and achieve competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Indeed, businesses are in a position to nurture employees by enhancing their knowledge and skill sets. This will inevitably lead to more competent staff and to significant improvements in work productivity among other benefits.

CSR can be reconceived strategically for business and educational outcomes. This research has given specific examples of how different organisations were engaging in responsible behaviours with varying degrees of intensity and success. It has identified cost-effective and efficient operations. It reported measures which were enhancing the human resources productivity. Other practices sought to engage in philanthropic practices and stewardship principles. Indeed there are positive outcomes that represent a leap forward for the CSR agenda. This contribution reiterated that it is in the businesses' self-interest to maintain good relations with employees. Evidently, there is more to CSR than public relations, greenwashing and posturing behaviours. Businesses need to engage with stakeholders and to forge long lasting relationships with them. Corporate responsible behaviours bring reputational benefits, enhance the firms' image among external stakeholders and often lead to a favourable climate of trust and cooperation within the company itself (Herzberg et al., 2011). A participative leadership will also boost the employees' morale and job satisfaction. This will also lead to lower staff turnover rates and greater productivity levels in workplace environments (Fida et al., 2014). Notwithstanding, there are many businesses that still need to align their organisational culture and business ethos in order to better embrace responsible behavioural practices.

Governments also have an important role to play. They can take an active leading role in triggering corporate responsible behaviours in education. Greater efforts are required by policy-makers, the private sector and other stakeholders. The governments could give reasonable incentives (through financial resources in the form of grants or tax relief) and enforce regulation in certain areas where responsible behaviour is necessary. They need to maintain two-way communication systems with stakeholders. This paper posited that the countries' educational outcomes and their curriculum

programmes should better respond to the employers' requirements. Therefore, educational programmes ought to instil students with relevant knowledge and skills that are really required by business and industry. Several governments, particularly those from developing nations, ought to step up with their commitment to develop new solutions to help underprivileged populations and subgroups. New solutions could better address the diverse needs of learners and prospective employees. This research indicated that there is scope for governments to work in collaboration with corporations in order to improve the employability of tomorrow's human resources.

7. Research limitations and future research avenues

It must be recognised that there are various forms of businesses out there, hailing from diverse sectors and industries. In addition, there are many stakeholder influences, which can possibly affect the firms' level of social responsibility towards education. It is necessary for governments to realise that they need to work alongside business practitioners in order to reconceive education and lifelong learning for all individuals in society. The majority of employers that were mentioned in this research were representative of a few corporations that are based in the most developed economies. Yet, there could be different CSR practices across diverse contexts. Future research could consider different sampling frames, methodologies and analyses which may yield different outcomes.

This contribution has put forward the 'shared value' approach in education (Camilleri, 2014; Porter & Kramer, 2011). It is believed that since this relatively 'new' proposition is relatively straightforward and uncomplicated, it may be more easily understood by business practitioners themselves. In a nutshell, this synergistic value notion requires particular focus on the human resources' educational requirements. At the same time, 'shared value' also looks after the stakeholders' needs (Camilleri, 2015). This promising concept could contribute towards bringing long-term sustainability by addressing economic and societal deficits in the realms of education. A longitudinal study in this area of research could possibly investigate the long-term effects of involving the business and industry in setting curriculum programmes and relevant learning outcomes. Presumably, shared value can be sustained only if there is a genuine commitment to organisational learning for corporate sustainability and responsibility, and if there is the willingness to forge long-lasting relationships with key stakeholders.

8. Recommendations

The corporations' social responsibility in the provision of education has potential to create shared value as it opens up new opportunities for business and society. There are competitive advantages that may arise from nurturing human resources (McKenzie and Woodruff (2013), Kehoe and Wright (2013) and Hunt and Michael (1983). As firms reap profits and grow, they can generate virtuous circles of positive multiplier effects. In a way, businesses could create value for themselves as well as for society by sponsoring educational institutions, specific courses and individuals. In conclusion, this contribution puts forward the following recommendations to foster an environment where businesses are encouraged to become key stakeholders in education:

- Promotion of business processes that bring economic, social and environmental value through the encouragement of innovative and creative approaches in continuous professional development and training in sustainable and responsible practices, including socially responsible investing (SRI), responsible supply chain management, the circular economy, responsible procurement of sustainable products, consumer awareness of sustainability/eco labels, climate change and the environmental awareness;
- Enhancement of collaborations and partnership agreements between governments, business and industry leaders, trade unions and civil society. There should be an increased CSR awareness, continuous dialogue, constructive communication and trust among all stakeholders.
- National governments ought to create regulatory frameworks which encourage and enable the businesses' participation in the formulation of educational programmes and their curricula.

- Policy-makers should ensure that there are adequate levels of performance in areas such as employee health and safety, suitable working conditions and sustainable environmental practices among business and industry.

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