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MANIFESTATION OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AT UNIVERSITY: THEORETICAL INSIGHTS

Abstract. At present the dynamic environment force business organizations to actively search for new ways and methods to remain competitive. Due to this reason business organizations more frequently stress social initiatives, which present an organization as an active member of the community, which cares for employees, environment, and society. This article discusses whether principles of social responsibility being implemented at business organizations can be adjusted at universities as well. Social responsibility renders great challenges for universities that pursue to educate young people able to responsibly deal with social problems. The article analyses the concept of social responsibility and peculiarities of its application in education sector – universities.

Keywords: social responsibility, higher education, university social responsibility, stakeholders, sustainable development.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the latter years sustainable development becomes more and more important in the political life of both Europe and other continents. Principles of sustainability are formulated in the Sustainable Development Strategy of the European Union (EU), the goals of the United Nations Millennium and a lot of other international declarations, national laws and initiatives. According to Lukman and Glavič (2007), the clear need that everyone would commit for sustainable development. Most business organizations, governments, institutions of local authorities and non-governmental organizations increasingly promote sustainable development. Around the world regulations and other legal documents, which would promote sustainable production and consumption, would activate collaboration of stakeholders, would diffuse knowledge and the best practice in environment protection by preserving society cohesion and by promoting prosperity of economics, are being prepared. A global phenomenon, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) aims to solve economic, social and

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environmental problems in order to increase both the benefit for society and for companies (Marinescu et al., 2010) and is the application of the strategy of sustainable development in practice.

Universities as business organizations are not an exception. Universities in general have a special role to play in guiding us towards a sustainable future. In general sense, education and especially higher education must educate leaders who would behave socially responsibly and react to constant changes of dynamic environment by legal constraints and ethical principles, as well as would meet increasing expectations of the society. According to the European University Association, universities accept their public responsibility for promoting social equity and an inclusive society. University social responsibility has become a central topic of positive discussion among organizations relating to higher education in the 21st century (Sawasdikosol, 2009).

The conception of social responsibility in respect of university has been analyzed very fragmentarily in Lithuania. It is possible to distinguish only several authors who tried to analyze the application of social responsibility or sustainability principles at universities (Grundey et al., 2007; Golubavičiūtė, Guzavičius, 2009). However, foreign scientists initiatively enough analyze and offer models in order to implement University Social Responsibility concept (Sawasdikolos, 2009; Narasimharao, Nair, 2010; Marinescu et al., 2010; Lukman, Glavič, 2007; Tetrevova, Sabolova, 2010) as well as they analyze possibilities of establishing a sustainable university (Velazquez et al., 2006).

The implementation of social responsibility as sustainable development strategy was induced by the World Declaration on Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century drawn up at the World Conference of Higher Education organized by UNESCO in Paris in 1998, the Communication of the 2009 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, Paris, 2009 held in compliance with the guidelines of the 1998 Declaration and the list of objectives of the Bologna Process. It is important to mention that in 2007 for the conformity of stakeholders and social responsibility initiatives the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) were formulated. It is a United Nations-supported initiative to promote and inspire responsible management education and research in academic institutions around the globe. The mission of the PRME initiative is to inspire and champion responsible management education, research and thought leadership globally. And in 2009 the University Social Responsibility Alliance, which united world universities for collaboration, was established after the 1st University Social Responsibility International Conference 2009. According to Sawasdikosol (2009), all alliance members are energized and excited with this new ability to connect with others across the globe with which they share the same belief that our society requires fundamental change through the use of social responsibility.

The **aim** of the article is to explain the corporate social responsibility at university and present the possibilities to adopt a social responsibility strategy to meet the expectations of the stakeholders. The **research object** of the article is social responsibility at universities. The research methods – scientific literature analysis has been used in the article. We organize the paper as follows. Firstly, we review the literature on social responsibility theory as the basic resource. Subsequently, we discuss the concept of University Social Responsibility, and then describe the principles of the University Social Responsibility in education field.

2. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Social responsibility has become an increasingly important concept both within the European Union and globally, and it has become part of the debate about competitiveness and sustainability in the globalization context. In the European Union, the promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) also reflects the need to defend common values and increase the sense of solidarity and cohesion. On the other hand, CSR means that European companies should behave responsibly wherever they operate, in accordance with the European values and internationally agreed norms and standards. Enterprises of all sizes, in cooperation with their stakeholders, can help by means of CSR to reconcile economic, social and environmental ambitions (Vasilescu et al., 2010).

The idea of corporate social responsibility, on which the Global Compact of 1999 is based, has developed for many decades and has been conceptualized in number of different ways. According to the EU definition, CSR is a "concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (European Commission, 2001). According to Ditlev-Simonsen (2010), this loose definition, with its focus on "voluntary" activities, gives room for different corporate approaches to the issue. Referring to Garriga, Mele (2004), Tetrevova, Sabolova (2010), Auld et al. (2008), Montiel (2008), Ditlev-Simonsen (2010), the general failure to define and delineate types of CSR has led to misunderstandings surrounding why firms support it, and the implications of this support, or lack thereof, for the potential of innovative policy mechanisms to be effective where government policy has been inadequate or absent.

Table 1 presents the concepts of social responsibility, which disclose alternative opinions of different scientists in order to define the concept of social responsibility.

Table 1. Definitions of Corporate Social Responsibility

Author, year	Definition
Bowen (1953)	Businessmen have an obligation to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society.
Friedman (1962)	The only responsibility of business is to increase profits for its owners.
Carrol (1979)	CSR encompasses a firm's consideration of its responsibility to investors and consumers, ethical responsibilities to society, legal responsibility to the government or the law, and discretionary responsibility to the community
Bartol, Martin (1994)	The term, which defines the decision-making of a business organization to function and manage the spheres, in which social responsibility can be implemented.
Daft (2006)	Obligation and duty of management to make decisions and take certain actions, which would bring positive contribution to the wellbeing of the society, as well as the organization.
Banerjee (2008)	Involvement and integration of social and environment protection issues into everyday operations of an organization by maintaining close relationship with all stakeholders. The latter matters have to be not the commitments regulated by laws.
Turker (2008)	CSR can be defined as corporate behaviors which aim to affect stakeholders positively and go beyond its economic interest.
MacGregor (2010)	Continuous obligation of a business organization to behave ethically and to contribute to economic development by improving life quality of society, employees and their families, as well as local community.

Source: modified by Tetrevova, Sabolova (2010), Marinescu et al. (2010).

The concepts presented in Table 1 partly coincide and disclose organizations' activity, according to which it is pursued to justify expectations of the society in economic, legal and ethical level. It is necessary to point out that Banerjee (2008) emphasizes that the decisions made within an organization have to be useful not only for the organization but also for the society. However, everything has to be based on goodwill/volitional activities but not on legally valid coercion to behave one or another way. According to Pruskus (2003), the concept of social responsibility is understood as moral responsibility of an organization. What it is called as the activity of the socially responsible organization by most foreign scientists, first of all, is organization's obedience to universally recognized moral maxims. Social responsibility of an organization emerges as the result of moral responsibility of organization's members (especially managers) as well as the outcome of ethical and non-ethical decision

making when solving moral problems. Having analyzed the concepts of social responsibility, it is possible to distinguish two aspects of this term. In *the first* case, CSR is treated as business decision-making by considering moral values and valid laws as well as expectations of people, community and society; *in the second* case – social responsibility is defined as open and transparent business practice based on moral values, respect for employees, society and surrounding environment.

The analysis of CSR concepts has revealed that the opinions of scientists are similar enough; so the following main CSR features can be distinguished: *values, environment protection, responsibility, commitment, volitional activities, the pursue for sustainable economic, social and environment protection development, concern for society, collaboration of organizations and stakeholders, justice and so on.*

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The implementation of social responsibility at business organizations is often discussed topic; however, the CSR implementation at universities, as it was mentioned above, is only fragmentarily analyzed topic. According to us, this is conditioned by several reasons.

First of all, the topic of competition among educational organizations has not been relevant for a long time; however, new challenges restructurise higher university education (Golubavičiūtė, Guzavičius, 2009). Nejati et al. (2011) point out that the competition becoming more intensive among universities enforces the paying of greater attention to universities' ranking locally and internationally, without sufficient focus on the applicability of the produced research and whether or not it will be of any help to the bottom billion. Descoings (2006) states that besides providing training, research, documentation, publishing, and the like, universities, first of all, have to take responsibility due to their research results and expertise, which must be available to the society as a whole.

Secondly, it is often thought that recent management paradigms cannot be applied in public sector. According to Golubavičiūtė, Guzavičius (2009), universities and business organizations possess similarities and differences. The principles of corporate management are to be applied in educational organizations; however, they have to be looked through and modified considering the specifics of education. Staškevičiūtė, Neverauskas (2008) argue that the final goal of all organizations is the satisfaction of society requirements. The *non--profit* sector encompasses all the organizations aimed at creating social value for society as a whole and which do not recognize as their main goal the creation of profit for stakeholders.

Thirdly, it would possible to assume that universities are socially responsible per se because their duty is to educate responsible and legally behaving citizens. However, should the mission/role of universities in the society be reconsidered? The changing environment, in which universities function, and its threats such as changing social expectations or increasing affluence, mass expansion of higher education; decrease of public expenditure for higher education; diversification of higher education provision; internationalization and commercialization of higher education, emerging private and non-profit providers of higher university education, popularization of teaching, changes in technologies and demography as well as globalization processes determine that in higher education it has to be moved to market-oriented decision-making (Golubavičiūtė, Guzavičius, 2009; Narasimharao, Nair, 2010; Vasilescu et al., 2010). It should be pointed out that today universities as well as other educational organizations attain the third level of social responsibility, i.e. *they voluntarily solve social problems of the society.* The main aim of public (state) educational organizations – *non-profit* organizations – is to serve the society or its groups by not pursuing for profit or direct participation at the state management. Universities perform a very important role in the society; they develop and form the viewpoint of future specialists, managers to social responsibility, environment protection and responsible usage of resources, responsible business. At present the mission of Lithuanian state universities is very clear: "qualitative higher education; scientific, cultural and educative activity." In their activity and research projects universities pursue to solve social problems of the society (Golubavičiūtė, Guzavičius 2009). It is possible to state that the principles of social responsibility are extraneous for universities; however, it is important how they implement the principles, whether they meet the growing expectations of the society, whether what universities do is more their obligation, which is foreseen in their activity.

In the case of universities, the importance of the social responsibility concept is, in view of their specific institutional character and mission, fundamental in comparison with the other types of economic entities (Tetrevova, Sabolova, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the concept of the so-called *university social responsibility* (USR). According to Tetrevova, Sabolova (2010), the key importance of social responsibility in case of universities stems from the fact that universities represent the centers of intelligence, knowledge and creative activity, and play the key role in the scientific, cultural, social and economic development of society. Universities can and must take direct action in their own field, namely education. According to Descoings (2006), as social institutions, universities must actively help building social solidarity and mobilize their partners in industry, government and even media in order to disseminate the benefit of their researches in the society.

Marinescu et al. (2010) distinguished several reasons that explain the application of CSR towards universities; they are as follows:

– universities are the main contributors for the formation of forthcoming employees both in public and private companies;

– universities play a major educational and research role within the communities in which companies operate;

– universities help people to find a balance between their personal needs and wants and those of the society;

– as the higher education market changes, building deeper strategic relationships with their stakeholders (e.g. the students, the employers, the state, the society etc.) has become central to the competitiveness of universities;

– universities contribute to regional lifelong learning and employability;

– the corporate involvement in universities has increased due to the broader marketization of higher education services;

– the rising of the collective awareness of students and professors creates the need for implementing initiatives related to CSR;

– universities are called to play an important role in meeting the environmental challenges by integrating the sustainability concept in the curricula, etc.

The distinguished reasons disclose that the role of universities is peculiar in creating the wellbeing of the society and developing responsible citizens. Nejati et al. (2011) agree that universities have to take social responsibility because many of them as a result of their large size, expressive movement of people and vehicles, high consumption of materials, and strong development of complex activities, may even be considered as "small towns". Therefore it is inferred that universities should be responsible toward society and their stakeholders. According to Vasilescu et al. (2010), USR helps to strengthen civic commitment and active citizenship; disseminate the ideas of volitional activities, heighten an ethical approach, develop a sense of civil citizenship by encouraging the students, the academic staff to provide social services to their local community or to promote ecological, environmental commitment for local and global sustainable development.

According to the authors of the article, the important USR concept is formulated by Reiser (2008), which is included in the International Association of Universities Policy Statements, together with other current challenges facing higher education – academic freedom and university autonomy, and also by the establishment of international organizations for this field, such as the University Social Responsibility Alliance (set up in 2008, in San Francisco, USA).

Reiser (2008) defines the USR concept as "a policy of ethical quality of the performance of the university community (students, faculty and administrative employees) via the responsible management of the educational, cognitive, labor and environmental impacts produced by the university, in an interactive dialogue with society to promote a sustainable human development." Reiser (2008) distinguished four axes of socially-responsive university change.

The USR aims to support development of the university environment, which will subsequently bring an increase in the interest in its services, and at the same time it will reflect well on its economy. USR as the ability of University as an institution to disseminate and implement a set of principles and values, through four key processes: management, teaching, researching and extension (Noguera, 2010).
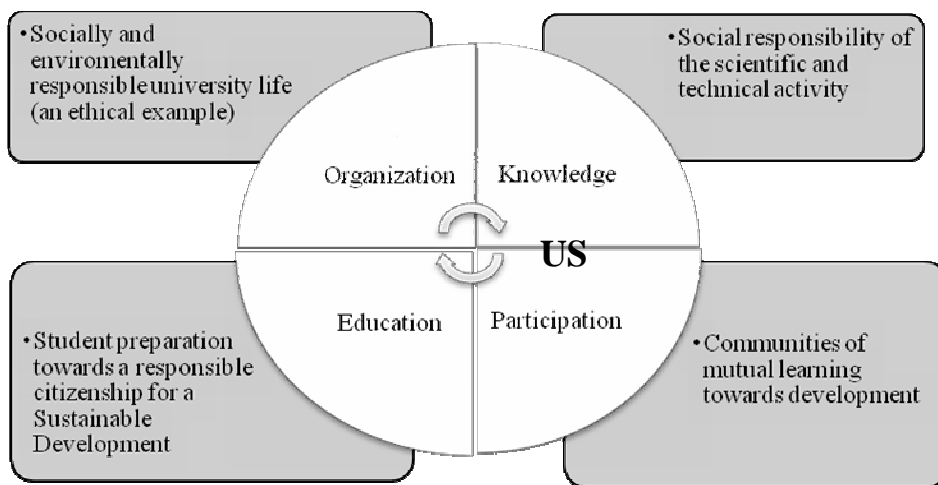

Fig. 1. Four axes of socially-responsive university change

Source: Reiser (2008).

Universities have focused their attention on incorporating sustainability principles into everyday activities and structures: *management performance* (vision, mission, statement, strategy, and sustainability council/coordinator), *education and research* (programs, curriculum, teaching methods), *operations, forming networks and reporting to stakeholders* (assessment tools, sustainability indicators). According to Tetrevova and Sabolova (2010), the university social responsibility can also be seen as a purposeful and rewarding communication between the university and its stakeholders. The authors argue that the primary university stakeholders may refer to the entities who can significantly affect the prosperity and future existence of the given university. In the case of public university, the primary university stakeholders are the students, the course applicants, the employees, the Ministry of Education and Science (in the Republic of Lithuania), grant agencies, businesses (as the sources of both monetary and non-monetary benefits resulting from the university-industry partnerships), other educational institutions (as both partners and competitors), and public stakeholder groups. In the case of private universities, they are also the owners and other investors. All the universities of both the private and the

public should try to contribute to the positive development of their stakeholders and to be socially responsible as it is the only way to fulfillment of their own objectives.

In order to satisfy the expectations and needs of the stakeholders, USR manifests in creating secure and healthy work places at university, following respect against the rights of students and university employees; ensuring equal rights of employees, learning possibilities, different support and consultation programs, employment of socially exposed persons and creating conditions for them, payment of transparent remuneration and premiums; in implementing the systems of employees' claims presentation and their resolution; in promoting the dialogue of organization's management and employees.

It should be noted that universities as well as business organizations should function in socially responsible society by focusing their attention to the needs of the society, encouraging the society to get involved into business and professional activity, supporting educational programs and developing responsible consumption, developing and strengthening the partnership with business and non-governmental organizations, and by pursuing to help students easier adapt/integrate into the labor market.

As it is above-mentioned, universities are as if small towns, which use a lot of different natural resources. Thus in the area of environment protection the socially responsible activities of the university manifest in effective and responsible use of resources, encouragement to create and produce "green" products, to more intensively get involved into the researches disclosing the impact of business organizations upon the nature, to promote the implementation of innovative clean and environment-friendly technologies, as well as to maintain collaboration relations with the groups of environment protection.

The benefit of USR activity is evident. When analyzing corporate social responsibility, scientists distinguish the benefit of socially responsible activities for business; however, we assume that universities can also have real benefit by performing socially responsible activity in their work. Social responsibility at university as well as at a business organization is an important factor for strengthening employees' motivation and attracting high-qualification employees as well as maintaining them. When developing social responsibility activities, good strong relationships with present and potential employees, students, social partners, socially responsible business companies, local community are being created. Scientific literature states that this is one of the most important aspects in forming the reputation and image of a university nationally and internationally. It should be pointed out that the implementation of social responsibility initiatives becomes the source for creativity, which can lead towards the formation of new researches and ideas as well as their diffusion in pursuing for the creation of country's wellbeing. Despite that the public universities are supported by the state, they also have to be economically profitable.

Thus the solution of environment protection problems, the saving of energy resources allows increasing the profit.

In summing up it is possible to state that university has not only to disseminate the ideas of social responsibility in educational process but also it has to actively implement the principles of social responsibility and sustainable development in its activity by involving students.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of social responsibility ideas at universities is great enough challenge in the society of the 21st century, which was induced by the Bologna Process. It is important to mention that the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) were formulated for the coordination of stakeholders and social responsibility initiatives as well as the European University Association was established: its initiatives support universities to review their strategies and direct all efforts to raise the students' awareness to the needs of the society, as full involved and dedicated individuals, not as individual personalities but as social personalities.

Undoubtedly, the implementation of the principles of social responsibility and sustainable development, the processes of assessment of their implementation and results in the practice are complicated and not detailed enough, thus they require deeper analysis. However, the implementation of the sustainable and/or socially responsible university idea in the practice can help the entire society to get involved into decision-making in global warming, inequality, environment protection, recycling and sustainable consumption as well as in their implementation.

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