

Impact and Challenges of Corporate Social Responsibility from Teamwork and Network of Higher Education Institution

John Rey SR. Soverano (PhD)

Bicol State College of Applied Sciences and Technology, Naga City,
Philippines
jonhreysoverano38@gmail.com

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Abstract - *This research article reviewed the literature involving higher education institutions in promoting and offering services that cater to the needs of the communities. Corporate Social Responsibility of higher education institutions were reviewed in terms of their impact to the students and employees as well as the challenges encountered during the program implementation. The importance of teamwork and network is also discussed. Results showed that open and constant communication with the industry partners and communities served as an important factor that influence to strengthen teamwork and network in order to better understand the needs of both parties between service providers and beneficiaries. Several challenges encountered in the study include the lack of knowledge of administrators and students on the social responsibility activities of the institution and lack of student involvement in the extension projects due to course requirements. Financial resources also noted as source of problem in the implementation of projects.*

Keywords: *Community Extension, Educational Institution, Partnership*

INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institution creates sustainable partnerships with local communities, industries, local government units, non-government agencies, and civic organizations to create remarkable impact and strengthen its network as part of social responsibility in building a resilient workforce and work place to support a knowledge-based economy. Community engagement in higher education is a shift beyond the traditional roles of instruction and research [1]. Extension services through corporate social responsibility (CSR) is one of the tri-fold functions of HEIs and maintaining relationship with mutual benefits among industries and other stakeholders bring a good avenue for sharing of resources, knowledge

and expertise. Giuffré and Ratto [2] also noted that knowledge and innovation are recognized as significant driving forces of economic growth, social development, and job creation promotion. CSR refers to the balancing practice of interests between different stakeholders of a firm in managerial decisions or business operations. It is a form of self-regulating mechanism that requires corporations to be responsible in their business processes [3].

Being a developing country with socioeconomic challenges, according to Asrar-ul-Haq et al. [3] that Pakistan can optimize CSR overall achievement by creating best synergy between organizational resources and need for education. The concept of University Social Responsibility [2] as called it in Argentina defined as the ability of the University to disseminate and implement a set of general principles and specific values, using four key processes: Management, Teaching, Research and Extension. Meanwhile, it is a philosophy or principle for social movement according to Chen et al. [4] which can be perceived as a philosophy of a university to use an ethical approach to develop and engage with the local and global community in order to sustain the ecological, environmental, social, technical, and economic development.

CSR is also considered to be an umbrella term under which the ethical rights and duties existing between companies and society are debated [5]. It is when companies voluntarily donate time or funds to benefit the community at large. Identifying the needs of the community still the first step in looking for possible project to be provided. Organizations may choose to address social or environmental issues [6] and to collaborate with customers, employees, community members and shareholders. Not only do recipients of CSR practices reap the awards which contribute a great impact to the companies and

academic institutions where they see the advantages in the form of attracting more customers like students, improving their brand, inspiring employees and increasing profit.

There is high pressure to make profits for private institutions where stakeholders expect ever increasing standards of accountability and transparency [7]. Setting a corporate social responsibility strategy, and implementing the actions is one powerful way of achieving the goal of developing a positive reputation [8] and differentiating each HEI from the competition [9]. Zamora [10] identified one of the challenges confronting flagship universities is the need to work on an optimal allocation of energies between improving international reputation and assuming a more significant role in nation building, social transformation and economic development, while ensuring its own growth as an institution of higher learning.

Resource dependence theory and social network theory are used to form the theoretical framework set up for understanding how governments build relations with local networks, including corporations [11]. Creating shared value (CSV) is based on the idea that corporate success and social welfare are interdependent. CSR has been an important issue in business management since decades. The article of Saeed and Arshad [12] theorizes CSR as a resource-generating activity by creating support networks, relationships and management of perceptions in the form of social and reputational capital based on the foundation of social identity theory and resource-based perspective.

Working as one team can accomplish more tasks and assignments compared to individuals working one-by-one on their own. It creates unity and harmony among the members of the institution in bringing CSR projects to the community which they can have the sense of ownership on the outcomes of their project. The success of the team, is also the success of the organization.

This study reviewed the literature involving higher education institutions in promoting and offering services that cater to the needs of the communities. It also provides some background information about the significance of Teamwork, Network and Linkages as applied in the Corporate Social Responsibility from the lens of the educational institutions together with the teachers and students as service providers. The discussion focuses on the problems and challenges of the institution in providing

services to communities and how teachers and students develop and enhance the sense of volunteerism through teamwork as an attribute within the organization as well as those external factors including stakeholders to bring sustainable CSR programs.

DISCUSSION

Higher Education Institutions play a vital role in developing communities based on its commitment and dedication to foster collaboration and initiate social transformation. The modern university is characterized by its contradictory nature: tradition versus innovation, stagnation versus renewal, statism versus dynamism. These pairs make higher education an area in constant evolutionary process today according to Giuffré and Ratto [2]. The performance of HEI in the delivery of extension services depends on its capacity and availability of resources to form networks and linkages in building strong relationship and teamwork among stakeholders. It provides powerful vehicle for bringing out environmental and behavioral changes which contribute to the holistic development of a community and its members [13]. The vision, mission, goals and objectives of the institutions also describe the outcomes of the CSR strategies.

Teamwork and Network

One of the important components of business CSR is the teamwork where the support of the people from the top management down to middle and rank and file employees must contribute to the attainment of the main objectives of the CSR projects. According to Nanthagopan [14] that networking is defined as the organization working with other organizations without formal contracts while a linkage is defined as organization working with other institutions with the formal contract. Kippure Corporate and Event [15] also noted that

“CSR can be combined with team activities so that all levels of employees can be directly involved in the social or environmental projects that the company envisions. Team building among workmates increases morale, work productivity and allows members to work together more cohesively”.

Identifying the characteristics of people within the institution is another important step in developing programs for the community. Ermolaeva [16] also

emphasized the importance of developing teamwork in the organization through understanding the capacity of both employees and students to deliver services based on the needs of the community. The support of the management on the way they understand the current condition and situation of the community might help them provide necessary actions to build a group of people in multidisciplinary team who could serve specific requirements of the beneficiaries.

Building team dynamics while serving the community can take on a myriad of forms. Participants can let design a project that is suitable to the company's vision and employees' interests. The possibilities are endless as they can focus on restoration, conservation, helping youth at risk, impoverished populations, arts and entertainment, assisting those with physical or intellectual disabilities and more [15]. Transition to teamwork in CSR implementation is possible in case of equality of opportunities, abilities, referentiality of participants, respect towards each other. Solving of social problems, arising in the society and organization, provokes the need for joined efforts, participation in various projects on solving social issues, and systematic work, in general [16].

Zamora [10] mentioned that Padayon UP and Pabatid UP are mechanisms and enablers to ensure that the institution is able to reach our target publics as part of its social responsibility. The more substantive elements of public service remain with the individuals and teams of faculty, researchers, students, and other scholars who formulate propositions and possible solutions to pressing problems of the country, based on scientific investigation.

Various stakeholders in the network and linkages as applied to CSR is very essential to sustain the community projects and other social development activities. Zamora [10] also noted that strengthening a nation's innovation system requires cooperation and commitment from three main players: the government, the private sector, and educational institutions. The network theory provides a quantitative framework that can be used to characterize social structure both at the level of the individual and the population [17]. The support system is necessary to build strong collaboration with the local government and other non-government agencies to implement smoothly the projects with the consent and permission of proper authorities. Cortado and Chalmeta [18] emphasized the importance of having involved the different sectors in the process of decision making as to the

correct CSR approach based on the interest of various stakeholders.

Meanwhile, this report also aims to describe network which is contextualized as a physical and virtual connection of people with unified or common vision of accomplishing CSR projects even without formal agreements unlike Linkages which can happen between two entities through having legal and binding contracts of partnerships. Networks are a fundamental organizational form for combining unique resources and competencies [19], [20]. Social responsibility as a practice involves the existence of mechanism for governing and managing the network from the point of view of socially responsible behaviours. The presence of network managers and inter-organizational routines are still difficult to find out even in large multinationals [21]. The same holds for network monitoring and reporting practices as well for partner selection procedures.

The local and international non-governmental organizations have made a significant contribution to the social impact in the past and continue to play an important role to improve the living standards of the vulnerable communities. It is for them to prove their ability to work at the community levels and to be innovative in responding to community needs. Networking and Linkages focus on very good communications and partnerships with others to serve people with mutual interest. Ge and Zhao [22] argue that diverse relations between organizations and the institutional authority can filter distinct institutional pressures and expectations, shape organizational interpretations of environmental demands, and thus trigger heterogeneous organizational practices.

More recently growing attention has been devoted to the social responsiveness of firms and to the issue of their "good citizenship" in a global scenery [23]. Governance is an important component of social responsibility which manages the network in the value chain more organized and compelling in strengthening the relationships among the members of the community. Establishing professional networks or civic organizations among institutions creates a venue for intellectual discussion and strengthens cooperation among individuals to contribute in the regional or national development.

Like for example, the Network for Social Responsibility of Slovenia was set up as a meeting point of companies and other organizations whose common purpose is to promote social responsibility, both within their companies and

organizations and as well in the wider social space [23]. Activities of the network are based on educating and raising awareness about the importance of social responsibility, the importance of the integration of socially responsible strategies in the operation of businesses and other organizations, and also presenting positive effects of integration of best practices from corporate social responsibility into their business strategy. In the Philippines, particularly in Region IV-A, there is a Network of CALABARZON Educational Institutions (NOCEI) which aims to promote collaboration in terms of research and academic activities including Community Extension program among the HEIs in the region. The Extension committee of NOCEI is now being intensified through conducting various activities through seminars and workshops that builds camaraderie among faculty members and even the students to foster volunteerism. They also share best practices in the implementation of Community Extension programs and learn from the ideas and perspectives of the members of the network.

The Online social network as a virtual platform rather than physical connection of people is a auxiliary approach to strengthen relationships among members of the established, identified and closed communities. It gives better opportunity to meet and organize ideas even the members are separated by time and space. Constant communication is an important component in managing relationships between corporation and the stakeholders. Without proper channel on how to reach them out and disseminate information and receive feedback will not be sustained the long-term partnership. This is where the role of online social network comes in to communicate easily the status and outcomes of the programs; cooperate with the members and forge other future collaborations for those who are interested to participate in the project. Online social networks are playing a key role when it comes to managing the relationship between company and stakeholders [24]. Stakeholder theory argues that the companies' decision-making processes should involve any group or individual that can affect or be affected by the realization of an organization's purpose [18].

Companies are increasingly concerned about the impact of the use of online social networks for interactive CSR communication on their reputation [25], but users can also employ them to express the complaints and negative impressions they have about the organizations, thus producing a very damaging

form of advertising [26], [27]. Furthermore, institutions must also provide good CSR contents online based on their advocacy.

Impact of CSR

The transfer of knowledge and technology to the communities is one of the goals of extension programs of the academic institutions. This is one way of creating an impact to the beneficiaries in terms of having applied their knowledge in livelihood activities as sustainable project and utilizing the technology for human capital and economic development. Dizon and Banawa [28] believed that the existence of symbiotic relationship between education and economic growth, where progress of one makes possible the development of the other. Giuffré and Ratto [2] suggested that society must be aware of the new paradigm of solidarity of Higher Education institutions to accomplish knowledge transfer demands. HEIs are expected to act with ethics as social actors in the promotion of knowledge transfer to communities while promoting a global sustainable development [2].

Several authors argued on the importance of social responsibility to be part of the institutional core values in order to realize the goal of the extension activities. Chen et al., [4] believed that social responsibility should be embedded into the core values and functions of university practices at every level so that it would be part of their habit in extending assistance to anyone in the community that produces certain level of impact. Aguado et al [29] believed that activities related to social responsibility has something to do with the development of work values of the faculty members. Teachers are also engaged in various activities related to community extension because of their commitment to realize the vision and mission of the institution [8], [30]. Asrar-ul-Haq et al. [3] emphasized that organizational commitment can be developed among employees by engaging in corporate social responsibility activities.

Providing services to the community enhances the credibility and reputation of the institution in transforming the society with wider perspective on quality of life. The beneficiaries of the extension projects could also sustain their social and economic development as a long term goal until they could able to support other communities. The students and teachers as part of the service providers benefit from the social activities of the institutions through developing projects from community assessment,

project formulation, implementation and evaluation. The social area projection in the universities generally involves technical assistance activities and institutional support through students volunteering [2]. They build relationships with the communities and try to reach out those people from far flung areas to send assistance through livelihood programs to enrich their character and values on volunteerism, collaboration, teamwork and empathy. Laguador and Chavez [31] emphasized that engineering students learned greatly from the community extension projects to strengthen the value of sincerity in helping others and to enhance the virtue of determination and perseverance in making others feel better.

There is also a great extent in influencing the co-students to become volunteers, exercising their leadership capabilities and roles in helping people and realizing the sense of social responsibility in understanding the needs of others [31]-[34],[53],[54]. Students also learned how to become cooperative in various community projects of the college [35]. It gives them a sense of ownership of the achievement as a team that brings fulfillment from sharing their time and resources to the community. Laguador and Chavez [31] believed that classrooms and communities require students to assume different learner roles. If students are passive learners in the classroom, they could be active learners in the community. Extension activities also provide certain learning processes that address the implementation of outcomes-based education [36]-[41] that an ordinary classroom setup could never impart.

Study of Rubi [42] from Bicol Region determined the effect of the program on the beneficiaries' personal development, on the beneficiaries' adoption of the skills they acquired from the training, and on augmenting the family income of the beneficiaries. Another study [13] from the same region evaluated the grassroots community entrepreneurial livelihood undertakings where the respondents have varied micro-small medium enterprises. The cooperation of the community in the identification of needs from the grassroots helped the academic institution in creating more programs and suggestions to the local government unit on how these small enterprises can be assisted.

Dizon and Banawa [28] conducted literacy classes in seven (7) municipalities of Northern Mindanao, Philippines for adult and out-of school youth which is designed to expedite the eradication of illiteracy in the region. The literacy classes served as

bridging program between community and school in boosting morale and self-esteem of the illiterate residents. The adult participants have given the confidence to participate in other community projects like livelihood and entrepreneurship training workshops after learning to write and read.

Results of the study of Laguador et al. [43] showed that the status of waste management practices in one local village in Batangas Province is already well-organized and orderly but still really needs sustainability, innovation and development of the habit making these as best practices in waste management. It was also noted that their practices had been already improved through the community extension service of the institution from the results obtained three years ago. A study [44] from the same institution revealed that the program design of coastal clean-up drive is perceived to be highly effective in developing an agenda on participatory coastal management, conserving the environment and has the potential to lessen the risks of acquiring diseases while less effective in providing opportunities for extra income.

Meanwhile, findings of the study of Montalbo [45] showed the impact of assessment on economical and social benefits in food production in terms of improving the attitudes of the beneficiaries (cooperation, respect, understanding, effective communication) for the betterment of the community, bringing the people together, building individual self-confidence, recognizing common goals of the leadership program; and developing readiness for formal schooling, cognitive growth and sportsmanship (reduced behavioral problems) through child development integration program.

Issues and Challenges of CSR

Issues of CSR have always been a part of the educational mission of higher education institutions, through implementing CSR strategies, higher education institutions are now using this approach as a part of their competitive strategy [9]. Symaco and Tee [46] noted that there is a wide variety of initiatives—including engaging diverse communities in health, education and environmental sustainability projects but social responsibility and sustainability development is still far from being fully integrated into the core activities of the HEIs.

Findings of the study of de Sousa et al. [47] showed difficulties in assessing social responsibility aspects because of the lack of discussion and little

socialization and debate of the data. Concerning everyday issues such as student service, environment issues, working conditions and local development is an exception because they have explicit opinions and often negative perceptions.

There are some issues on assessing the needs of the community where some of the organizations do not undergo the step of problem or needs identification before they offer services to the adopted communities. This scenario brings misalignment in the goals of the community extension where the appropriate needs of the beneficiaries are not being met and later on the services provide to them become useless. Therefore, community needs assessment is a must to facilitate by the service providers to better understand the problem and later create the right impact for the beneficiaries. The study of Caluza et al. [48] assessed the level of ICT competencies of public school teachers in one Primary School in Eastern Visayas Region and it was revealed that most of the teachers have a basic knowledge on ICT which needs further improvement through giving more training gearing towards the enhancement of the quality of instruction.

From a managerial perspective, adopting new, recurring CSR initiatives can be complex and risky, not only because managers have to decide whether or not to respond to a variety of internal and external stakeholder pressures, but also because they have to evaluate whether recurring CSR initiatives will actually fit with currently prevailing practices [49].

The concept of network for CSR is somehow related with the value chain. Wenzhong [5] emphasized that understanding of a firm's CSR issues based on value chain model is an important foundation for scientifically managing or preventing the related problem. Only when all the CSR issues in each line and staff function have been managed can a firm handle the real challenge of sustainable development.

Laguador and Chavez [50] mentioned that limited exposure in the community activities of students has always been a challenge among institutions of higher learning which hinders the opportunity for the students to see the issues that the society needs to address. There are also some challenges of student to get involved in the community activities due to some factors related to their academics, personal and social life in college. Authors believed that measuring the student outcomes from the service learning experiences could help the institution in assessing the

relevance of curriculum with some student activities. The study of Laguador and Chavez [50] showed that engineering students are willing to participate in the community extension when they have free time; when they will be joining with friends or classmates and because they will be given extra points in their grades. Likewise, academic aspect is considered the primary barrier encountered by the engineering students in joining the community extension projects.

The study of Labrador et al. [52] from Eastern Visayas Region aimed to find out the different issues and problems in the delivery, management and implementation of extension programs carried out by leading agencies concerned in local socioeconomic development. Result of the study showed that the non-availability of transportation is the most prevalent problems in the conduct of extension program or activities. Meanwhile, Muya and Luansing [8] noted some challenges among administrators who lacked knowledge of CSR while student and employees were unaware of the CSR activities of their respective institutions. On the other hand, Labrador et al [52] mentioned that time-constraint is considered a challenge in the implementation of the extension projects because some technical skills cannot be mastered in just few days of training according to the beneficiaries. The limited time with the trainers is addressed through constant monitoring of the outputs of the beneficiaries as they applied the skills acquired from the workshop. Meanwhile, Ávila et al. [51] noted without the support of senior management within a university, bottom-up sustainable initiatives seem destined to fail in the longer term due to a lack of investment and administrative support.

Meanwhile, forging linkages and network is a necessity in order to attain a sustainable extension program and activities considering that individual organization working independently failed to attain such objectives, hence establishing a triadic collaborative extension program undertaking between the three organizations in the locality which has the same mandates and objectives is the most appropriate strategy [52].

CONCLUSION

Constant communication is one of the factors that strengthen the teamwork, network and linkages among the institutions and their respective stakeholders. They could have adequate resources to share with the community but without proper coordination and collaboration among the members of the organization

and the community residents, the project will not push through nor become sustainable. It is important part of the management to strengthen its internal communication within organization to get the commitment and support of the students and employees to maintain the relationship with other organizations and continue the projects in assisting vulnerable communities.

Giving great importance to the value of partnership and relationship is also one of the elements in maintaining good linkages through proper rapport and camaraderie between service providers and beneficiaries. The strong network of professional organizations and personal connection with the people in the community and business owners should be kept active and working to bring more results and outcomes that will become beneficial for both parties. The teamwork gives meaning to the project and let everyone realize their contribution as a group who builds and uplifts the lives of the community which is the noble mission of CSR.

The CSR brings a lot of great impact to the students, faculty members and employees of academic institutions and more so to the beneficiaries. The sense of volunteerism is being developed for the students and enhanced their leadership capability to become lifelong learners.

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