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Reputation Management in Educational Organizations: Suggestion of a New Model

Turgut Karak

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Introduction

We hear the phrases of having and losing reputation frequently in daily life. The title of reputable is generally used for people loved and respected by the society. In addition, reputation is used for meaning respect, regard shown to a person or an object from outside or the community and expressed as a perception of the public (Davies et al. 2003, 37; Marconi 2001, 20; Sherman 1999, 11).

The concept of reputation is consists of two main elements such as identity and image. Of these elements, image explains how an organization is perceived by outside shareholders meaning costumers, government representatives, media, and society. Identity concerns how an organization appears to internal shareholders (Schultz and Werner 2005; Davies et al. 2003, 25–26; Gopalakrishnan 2000). Reputation is a general identity including both identity and image, and implies total perceptions of both internal and external shareholders related to the institution.

Reputation management strategy is a professional service which is more recent than other service sectors and it helps, supports organizations. Interest in reputation management first increased in 1990 in USA. With subsequent “Most Admired Corporations” research done by Fortune Magazine, reputation management started drawing attention in global market (Deepphouse 2002).

Reputation management concerns forming a strong organizational reputation, its continuation and is defined as a general view point of the social sphere (Nakra 2001, 402; Connolly 2002). Therefore reputation management can be defined as process of controlling and directing thoughts, knowledge, emotional reactions of internal and external shareholder groups such as organizational employees and customers, investors, stock owners, suppliers etc. about the organization. Reputation management does not just include directing perceptions of the organization’s shareholders but also revising and developing organizational process.

Like other organizations, reputation is very significant for educational institutions which are service organizations. The primary goals of schools are educating the student and developing their behavior (Mitchell 1995, 201). Only with high quality education, students can be raised to become analytical, thinking, researching, questioning individuals sensitive to environment. Healthiness of students’ physical, mental and social development is proportional to the quality of education-instruction service they receive in the school. Schools will have good reputation in the community in the degree they serve this purpose.

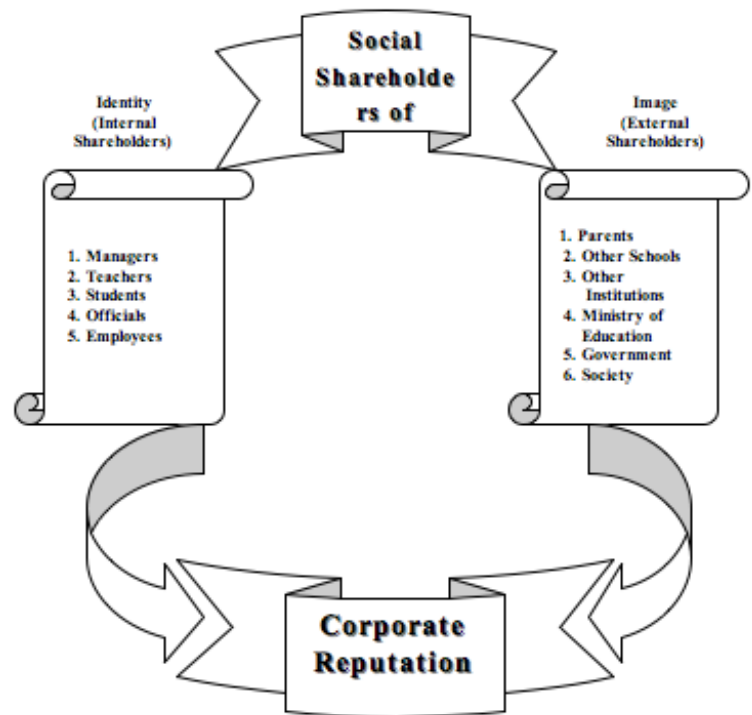
Reputation management in terms of educational organizations can be defined as efforts for controlling perceptions of internal and external shareholders of the school about the institution and directing them by conforming them to organizational goals. A good reputation has an effect on winning the sympathy of internal and external shareholders and school’s job results. The reputation of educational institutions is formed as a result of cooperation based on trust and reputation may get damaged as a result of a possible trust crisis. Therefore it is important for corporate reputation to build a cooperation based on

trust between the school and social shareholder groups.

Elements that play role in school management can be split into two as internal and external. Internal elements can be grouped as administrators, students, officers and other staff while external elements are defined as parents, lobby groups and leaders, management structure, business market and central organization (Bursalioglu 2000, 39). In this context, we can analyze the reputation of educational organizations in two sections: *identity and image*. *Identity* explains how the educational organization is perceived by internal shareholders. In other words, it consists of thoughts of teachers, managers, students and other employees about the school. *Image* concerns the perception of external shareholders and consists of thoughts of parents, experts, society etc. about the educational organization. Reputation is a collective concept formed by the subjective views of *internal and external shareholders* about the organization. Identity and image are the most important elements of corporate reputation. A reliable and consistent harmony between these elements will strengthen the corporate reputation. The relationship between the *internal and external shareholders* of the school and corporate reputation is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Relationship between social shareholders of the school and corporate reputation

Two elements have direct effect in reputation's construction, perseverance and strength in educational institutions. These elements are *internal and external shareholder* groups affecting and affected by school's reputation. Therefore it is possible to classify administrators, teachers, students, officers and other servicemen as *internal shareholders*. Internal shareholders are the most important group that affects school reputation, in other words the corporate identity. Since they are in direct contact with customers meaning external shareholders, their attitudes and behavior have an important affect on the corporate reputation.



Students are also classified as internal shareholders. Despite students are perceived as external customers benefiting from school's education-instruction service, they affect and are affected by school's reputation as much as administrators, teachers and other staff by living in the some environment with school employees for the academic year. Therefore it is more appropriate to evaluate students in internal shareholder group instead of outside customers group.

Image consists of impressions of *external shareholders* that affect educational institutions' reputation. School's *external shareholders* can be classified as following: students' parents and organizations they form other schools and their employees, other institutions (business world, other occupational establishments, NGOs, medical world, thought leaders in society and organizations they form etc.), Ministry of Education, government and society.

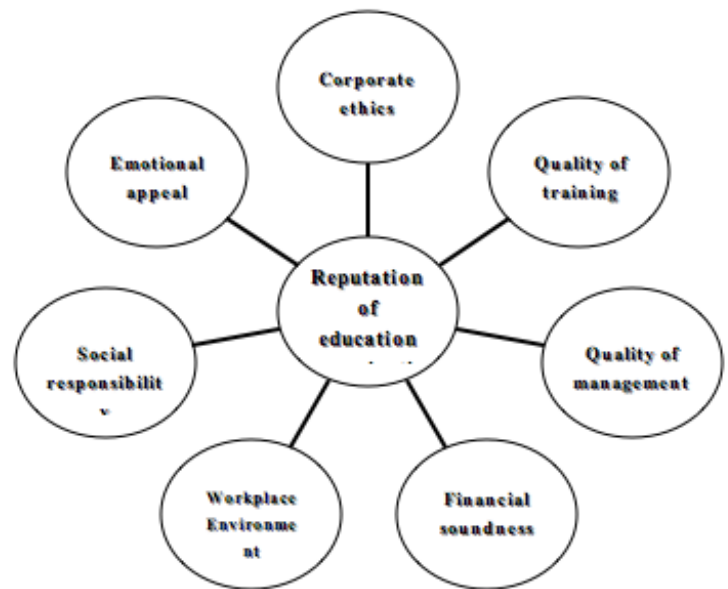
Among external shareholders, students' parents are the most important group that affect and are affected by corporate reputation. High quality of the education given in a school and as a result student's success is a desired measure expected by student's guardians and shapes their views about the school. No matter how rich a school is in physical and other resources, if high quality education isn't served there and students are unsuccessful then positive reputation can't be a possibility. Students' guardians and other shareholders expect educational institutions to raise the students the best way and place them to the community. Therefore, schools that can't meet these expectations can't have a good reputation in the eyes of social shareholders. Negative impressions of shareholders about a school pose a potential danger to corporate reputation.

Figure 2 shows formation of reputation in educational organizations and its affect area, meaning the cycle of corporate reputation. Corporate reputation in educational institutions can be explained as following. The school's reputation consists of two different elements: *identity and image*. School's identity is formed by internal shareholders' emotions and thoughts about the institution while school's image consists of impressions of external shareholders. In this context, school's reputation is made up by the combination of perceptions of internal and external shareholders.

Figure 2*. Circle of corporate reputation in education organizations

*adapted from Schultz and Werner, 2005

If internal shareholders meaning employees and students are content with school's management, educational service and physical opportunities and have positive thoughts about the school, then their trust and loyalty to the school can be expected to act in the direction of organizational goals by developing. In parallel with this, with satisfaction of external shareholders, a positive image can be obtained in the outer sphere. The trust and loyalty of external shareholders to the school will increase, if they are content with institution's activities.



Reputation of educational organizations is an abstract value but affect the institutional success directly. Since reputation is formed by perceptions of internal and external shareholder groups, the perceptions in question have to be managed and directed towards school's goals. The impressions of both internal and external shareholders towards the school are different. Since every individual's life philosophy, education and past experiences are different; this leads individuals to react differently to certain events. In order to form a strong reputation inside and outside the school, the emotions and thoughts of social shareholders have to be managed effectively and defects in organizational process have to be corrected by revisions. By eliminating negative perceptions in social shareholders' minds with effective reputation management strategy in educational organizations, a strong reputation can be built inside and outside the institution.

Researches show that different shareholder groups prefer and give priority to different elements of corporate reputation. For example; while management quality and economic performance are more important elements for investors; product and service quality, customer services are most important priorities for customers (Brotzen 1999, 54). In this context, the main criteria of reputation can be grouped under these headings: Product and service quality, management quality, financial strength, work environment, emotional attractiveness, social responsibility, corporate ethic (Bromley 1993, 175-176; Westcott 2005; CSR Magazine 2003; Reputation management 2005).

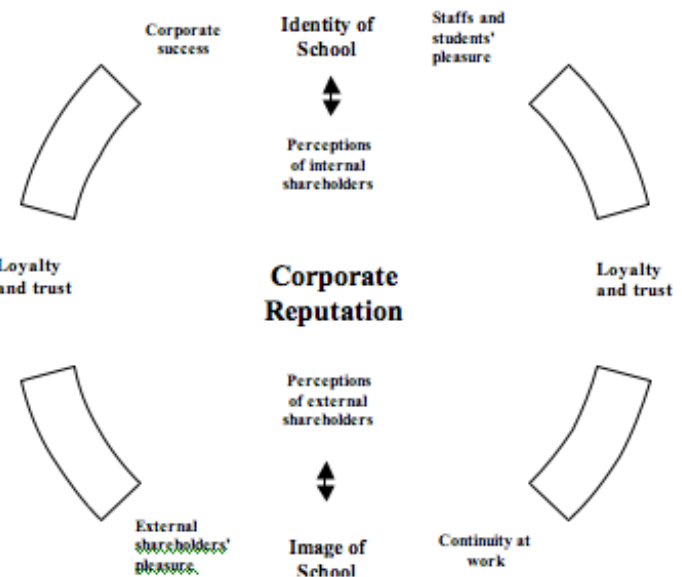
When the researches on corporate reputation are analyzed, it is seen that determination of organizations' reputations is based on these and similar measures. Therefore, we can state that corporate reputation is composed of combination of various elements for educational organizations. These elements can be analyzed in seven dimensions which are quality of training, quality of management, financial soundness, workplace environment, emotional appeal, social responsibility, and corporate ethic as following (see Figure 3):

Figure 3*.Dimensions of reputation of education organizations

*adapted from Bromley 1993; Westcott 2005; CSR Magazine 2003; Brotzen 1999.

1. Quality of Training

Quality of training and high quality of education-instruction service given at a school includes measures such as individual and occupational qualifications of institution employees. The emotional relation between institution and social shareholders content with the quality of education-instruction service will be stronger and this will contribute to growth of school's respectability in the sphere. For building reputation in educational institutions, first the quality of education and instruction service needs to be increased. This is possible by developing knowledge and skills of employees. Qualifications of school employees affect corporate reputation. A knowledgeable and qualified teacher will be able to present education-instruction service better and as a result student success will increase.



Educational organizations' good reputation is possible by desired behavior change in students meaning students' success. A good reputation is not possible in a school where students fail in every field. Therefore students must be raised diligently as researching, criticizing, questioning individuals who internalizes knowledge and learns to how to learn. High quality of education and instruction service is a necessary component for the respectability of the school.

2. Quality of Management

Quality of management in educational institutions can affect their reputation positively or negatively. First, managers are responsible for construction and development of the abstract value of reputation (Johnson 2000; Celik 2003, 48). The duties of principals are producing solid ideas for future, presenting ideas and solution methods to school staff about what to do and how. For achieving efficiency in educational institutions, principal should establish friendly communications with employees and thus make the school a pleasant environment to work in. One of the most important leadership roles of the principal is giving employees' motivation by creating a positive effect on their morale and job satisfaction.

3. Financial Soundness

Financial soundness concerns the suitability of school building structure and equipment, adequacy of course materials to serve educational needs of students. One of the reasons organizations can't reach their goals is inadequacy of technical and physical equipment or resources. Therefore, for effective and efficient educational institutions, physical and technical deficiencies have to be mended.

4. Workplace Environment

Workplace environment dimension concerns whether the work environment in school is sufficient in serving students' individual and educational needs. Because employees' enthusiasm, determination, admiration for their jobs will affect the institutional success, it is important to create ideal and efficient work medium for staff. Researches show that school employees care about satisfaction of mental environment and institutional climate. Formation of a satisfying institutional climate depends on display of honest and objective management understanding by the school administration.

5. Social Responsibility

Social responsibility of educational institutions closely concerns conservation of public benefit principle in schools and raising students as citizens helpful to the community and themselves. Educational institutions have to consider their societies' realities and expectations in order to leave a good impression in the community. The quality of education and instruction services has to be raised as required by understanding of social responsibility. In this context, presentation of education and instruction service that considers environmental changes, social expectations, modern changes and developments in schools is important. In other words, raising students as thinking, understanding, interpreting individuals who produce knowledge is important in terms of school's reputation.

6. Emotional Appeal

Emotional appeal implies respectability, appreciation and trust (Grandison and Sloman 2000). Emotional appeal of educational organizations is related to internal and external shareholders finding the school respectable and trustable. In addition, it also includes loyalty of employees and customers. Loyalty of employees and customers is necessary for reputation in educational institutions. A loyal teacher and student who identify themselves with the institution can recommend the school to others as a nice place to work or receive education. A positive attitude like this will increase respectability of the school in the sphere. Earning the trust of internal and external shareholders and being consistent in deeds and words are also considered as important for corporate reputation. Reputation of educational institutions develops or erodes as a result of this trust.

7. Corporate Ethic

Reputation of an organization can be damaged as a result of unethical behaviors. Therefore avoiding unethical behavior in work and daily life is important. An ethical life is every human's necessity for existence (McCurdy 1998; Schultz and Werner 2005). Followers expect their leaders to be trustworthy, honest, open and sincere. In order to maintain their leadership, the leaders of future will give importance to humanity values and ethical behavior necessary for effective leadership. First of all, leaders should behave according to certain open ethical standards and volunteer for this kind of behavior (Duncan 1991).

Corporate ethic for educational institutions can be considered as a dimension related to ethical behavior forms which are essential to abide by inside and outside the school. Education should be served in the light of universal ethical values in schools and everyone should be treated equally without discrimination in terms of language, religion, race and gender. In addition, being objective in evaluation and grade assessment, creating an environment where personal rights are respected and everyone can express their opinions freely are important in terms of corporate ethic. Stating ethical behavior in schools orally and in writing is not enough. Therefore school administration and teachers should be honest and consistent in their deeds and words, and internalize ethical behavior by living it.

Finally, for effective management of corporate reputation in educational organizations, these measures can be considered:

Reputation of educational institutions consists of two main elements like identity and image or perceptions of internal and external shareholders. The view points of these shareholders on institutions can be shaped by effective management of perceptions in question. Therefore making a functional communications plan that includes internal and external shareholders is important for corporate reputation in educational institutions.

Educational understanding of today requires schools to become learning organizations. Education in the light of modern changes and developments can be expected only in a constantly learning school. Turning schools into learning organizations will naturally increase the success of employees and students and eventually affect corporate reputation in a positive way.

Student success affects school's reputation positively. The quality of education-instruction service given at a school is a label that will separate it from other competitors. Therefore, individual and occupational qualifications of school employees are an important factor for school's internal and external reputation.

Teachers are at the top of the shareholders that affect and are affected directly by school's reputation. Therefore it is important to make teachers content by meeting their individual expectations and educational needs. It should be remembered that strong reputation in educational organizations can be built only by employees satisfied with their work.

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*adapted from Bromley 1993; Westcott 2005; CSR Magazine 2003; Brotzen 1999.

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