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Corporate Social Responsibility Education in the Czech Republic

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Abstract

The corporate social responsibility (CSR) movement has gathered great momentum over the past number of years is now regarded as being at its most prevalent. However, there has been a lack of attention to, and discussion of, CSR in Czech and in relation to education. The paper reports findings from a survey of CSR education (teaching and research) in the Czech Republic. It analyses the extent of CSR education, the different ways in which it is defined and the levels of teaching. The paper provides an account of the efforts that are being made to mainstream CSR teaching and of the teaching methods deployed. It considers drivers of CSR courses, particularly based on historical development and the anticipation of future success being dependent on more institutional drivers. Finally it considers main developments in CSR research both by business school faculty and students, tomorrow's researchers and the resources devoted to CSR research. The conclusion includes questions that detected further research directions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper reports survey of corporate social responsibility (CSR) education in condition of the Czech Republic (CR). We mean teaching and research of CSR in this country with emphasis to the public role of the business school (private and state). The significance of this survey lies in the question as to whether business school are no more than brain washing institutions education their graduates but if appropriately develop CSR approaches in their teaching. Others have concluded that there is an “intellectual bias against business ethics” in business ethics and similarly oriented areas is systematically discouraged and seen as a “field of study...falling somewhere on the vector between ambivalence and disdain” (Hosmer, 1999, pp. 91, 102). Conversely other surveys have presented a more positive picture, notably the Beyond Grey Pinstripes report of the Aspen Institute

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conducted first in 2001 and repeated (Aspen/WRI, 2003). These findings contrast with some earlier studies (for an overview see Collins and Wartick, 1995) by depicting a growing interest and consolidation of business ethics and responsibility related topics in business schools' teaching and research agendas. In Czech there was an study in 2008 from the University of Economics, Prague, which was attended by 236 students. The research proposal was focused on determine the general knowledge of the CSR and how to get the original information on this concept. The research showed that the term CSR knows 73% of those surveyed students, mostly from newspapers or by studying at the school.

The general field of CSR in Europe is shaped somewhat differently and took longer to take off as an academic discipline. Certainly the most comprehensive initial overview over the situation in Europe has been provided by Mahoney (1990) in a comparative study of the teaching of business ethics in the U.S., U.K. and continental Europe. More recent information on the situation in European business schools has been case-study based work on business ethics practice in various European countries (Matten and Moon, 2004). In 1998, the European Business Network for Social Cohesion and The Copenhagen Centre provided information of a range of business schools' activity but did not aggregate or interrogate the findings. So far then, there has been little attention to assessing the overall state and shape of the contemporary CSR field in European business schools.

This paper reports on the findings of a survey that was designed to fill the gaps in relation to connection of the concept of CSR in terms of educational institutions in Czech. The first goal was to provide an overview of teaching and research in the broad field of CSR and describe the main institutions that are significant from this point of view. We assumed that CSR would mostly be understood as an umbrella term for a broad set of synonyms and different concepts reflecting both business and society relations and business ethics. The second goal was to capture the range of meanings of and activities in CSR reflecting Czech's different business and educational contexts. Thirdly, we were interested in finding out what role in terms of visibility, acceptance with students, resource provision for research and general expect the area possesses at Czech universities.

The choice of the terminology of CSR was determined by the action that key institutional players (such as the 2002 founded European Academy of Business in Society, key media and to a growing degree, corporate oriented publications seems to have made this term an increasingly popular label (e.g., www.csreurope.org). The new imperatives for CSR raise the challenge for corporations to acquire and develop appropriate skills and competencies. This raises the question of the role played by universities and business schools, the key provider of business education, in terms of:

- Provision of graduates with CSR skills,
- Supply of CSR education for practitioners,
- Specialist CSR education for industries,
- Research to advance knowledge in CSR.

The paper analyses these issues by addressing the following questions:

- At what levels and in what sorts of courses in CSR taught?
- Is CSR taught to business students, tomorrow's business leaders and managers?
- What meanings are attached to CSR education?
- Is CSR teaching conducted with business and community partners?
- What are the drivers for CSR teaching?

The paper continues, first the brief characteristic of literature review of CSR meaning and terminology. Secondly, we define the current approach of CSR in the Czech Republic - as the institutional background, as well as in the educational process. We define the key players in the field of CSR and the core institutions.

1.1. Literature review

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) movement is rapidly growing in signification as a strategic management instrument over the past number of years. Not only has the issue received academic attention but has quickly moved up the corporate agenda (Knox et al., 2005, Ogrizek, 2002). However, there has been a lack of attention to, and discussion of, CSR in the Czech Republic. The considerable emphasis placed nowadays on the societal role of business is in accordance with the spreading belief that measures of company success must go beyond profit and should also relate to the needs of stakeholders and society at large (Natale and Sora, 2009). According to Carroll (2000) CSR is becoming the defining business issue of our time, affecting corporate profits and credibility, as well as personal security and sustainability of the global economy.

One of the factors contribution to the extension of CSR is the lack of consensus as to what the concept really means (Carroll, 1979; Panapanaan et al., 2003). Although the acronym CSR is now well rooted in the business lexicon (specifically in the European approach), a meaning of the term remains a subject of much debate (Roberts). Dahlsrud (2007) identified 37 of definitions that have variety of significance. It has been described as and subjective (Frederic, 1986), unclear (McWilliams, 2001), amorphous (Margolis and Walsh, 2001), highly intangible (Cramer et al., 2004), ambiguous (Fisher, 2004) or as and concept with unclear speculative boundaries. The majority of Czech authors (Trnková, Putnová, Čaník, Řezbová, Zavřel, Dytrt, Petříková) used a positive approach to the definition based on subjective perspective. One of the most cited definitions could be seen from Carroll (1999) which is constantly being developed by many authors.

CSR has also been characterized as the concept in a variety of ways such as legally complying with the letter of the law, complying with the social and environmental codes of conduct engaging in corporate philanthropy, and the broader impact that business has on society among others (Jenkins, 2004; Khan et al., 2011; Prieto-Carron et al. 2006). According to the first authors (dealing with CSR issues) such as Berle, Means or Bowen, the emergence of the concept is due the increase in large companies. They already define the social responsibility of the businessman as a voluntary integration of social values in the management. A major idea is that CSR can be determined by the consequences of the company's activities on the stakeholders. CSR's issues are focused on a triple bottom line which includes: economical, social and environmental issues. The role of business in society is rapidly changing and the companies no longer operate in isolation but are a part of the business environment. The sustainability Performance management is also a new term in the field of entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility (Kocmanová and Dočekalová, 2012). In relation to business and education, a variety of definitions have been proposed which focus on issues such as number of employees working in the enterprise, annual turnover, ownership types, and formal versus informal economy status (Jamali et al., 2009).

Additionally, well educated managers of e.g. SMEs plays a significant role in the local community with a high-degree of inter-reaction and acting as benefactor by support to the local economy by creating job opportunities. It has been argued that companies are constrained by the time and financial resources (Sarbutts, 2003 and Vives, 2006). On the other hand, it has been argued that being smaller and flatter; SMEs may be better placed than large firms to take advantage of the changing needs of society (Perez-Sanchez, 2003 and Sarbutts, 2003). Therefore, it is necessary to include in education, especially at universities the field of CSR. The acquired knowledge is then transferable by graduates (managers) into practice. Business ethics and community support play an important role in various business environments.

1.2. CSR approach in the Czech Republic

In the CR at the beginning was the impulse of most companies involved to focus purely on philanthropic donations. Over the time, a number of companies have steadily been growing and companies are engaged in a remarkable range of activities. Today, Business Leaders' Forum's mission is promotion and enforcement of CSR in line with European methodology and best standards. The Forum closely cooperates with the European Commission and European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (BLF, 2012).

The *harmonization* of Czech law with EU legislation, and the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union, contributed to major advances in the promotion of CSR. As long ago as 1998 the Czech Republic adopted, among other things, rules for the introduction of Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (hereinafter also EMAS), and prepared the first National EMAS Program. The program was updated in 2002 and is currently governed by EC Regulation no. 761/2001. In order to fully participate in this program, companies must, among other things, introduce an environmental management system which contributes to the continuous improvement of their environmental conduct. In 2007 there were 17 Czech organizations registered in the EMAS Registry, and another 1.500 in the EMS system (ISO 14001) from *Czech Environmental Information Agency*. The *milestone* in building foundations of CSR was August 2003, when the Sustainable Development Council of the Czech Government (hereinafter also SDCG) was established as a standing advisory body of the Government for sustainable development and strategic management. Increasing interest in CSR and a trend in implementation of CSR reflect also surveys of the Business Leaders' Forum. In 2004 in the survey 76 % of surveyed companies claimed to be involved at least in one CSR activity (the most frequently towards employees); in 2007 it was almost 90 %. CSR awareness has also been increasing thanks to international corporations operating in the country as they belong among main supporters of CSR and have brought essential know-how.

As CSR gaining its popularity among entrepreneurs, some non-governmental organizations have been focusing on building partnership between profit and non-profit organizations in the area of corporate philanthropy, corporate volunteerism, social marketing, environmental protection and others (e.g. HESTIA, AISIS, Czech Donors Forum, Environmental Law Service, Business Leaders' Forum, etc). In March 2007 the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs created a new website on CSR, to inform users about the concept of CSR in the European Union. The website also provides references to different projects and activities concerning the promotion of CSR (Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2012).

According to surveys in the business sector, it appears that the main CSR related priorities are the environment, well-being and philanthropy. In each field is the most important to get into public awareness while the SMEs should implement this approach and gaining the competitive advantage in the futures market. For that purpose was founded the *key CSR actors* in the Czech Republic: Ministry of Human Rights and Minorities (www.vlada.cz); Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (www.mpsv.cz); Ministry of the Environment (www.mzp.cz); Ministry of Industry and Trade (www.mpo.cz); Business Leaders Forum (www.blf.cz, www.csr-online.cz); Association of Fair Business (www.korektnipodnikani.cz); Czech Society for Quality.

Awareness is widespread, but information is lacking as to specific CSR topics. Many CSR-related activities are of common public knowledge but they are understood as concepts in and of themselves and not within the CSR context. However, the broader concept of CSR is slowly taking root in educational institutions such as universities. It is often covered in courses on Corporate Governance, Business ethics and in some cases it exists as a separate course as well. From *environment part* of situation in CR are related - *National action plan* - the current policy on climate change is in the process of modification (Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, 2012). Environmental awareness is largely promoted through the *Czech Republic's National Cleaner*

Production Program. In addition, there are a number of educational programs that reach out to the younger generations, introducing them to important personal practices such as sorting waste.

From the *cooperation between local communities and businesses* there we found that the business community involvement is generally not innovative. While normative projects and activities are carried out, ongoing dialogue and cooperation between businesses and communities is not common. *Sustainable Products and Services* are included into the Czech Republic's National Trademark on Quality is given to products that meet certain standards regarding quality/sustainability. The program consists of approximately 20 trademarks, including several that focus solely on environmental impact of the product. It was mentioned that company best practices is implemented into the *Business Leaders' Forum*. Currently, has collected and disseminated practical CSR tools and guidelines via its web portal.

2. Methodology

Although our aim was to include institutions and types of CSR courses, a new issues arise in the study of CSR education in the methodological field. In this paper, we focus on the public high schools (universities in Czech) of economic type. In the CR, there is clear structure of universities. They are divided into four groups: 1. state universities, 2. public universities, 3. private universities, 4. universities with MBA program (see Table 1). We only targeted at the public sector, which is crucial because it allows education to all groups of potential students, there is no discrimination in terms of regular financial payments, this education is free for all students and it is financed by the state budget.

Our focus is institutional and research tool was expressly designed to elicit information about business schools and their broader attitudes, approaches and indeed their openness towards teaching and research activities in the chosen area. As the concept of CSR does not originate in Europe, we expected a range of terms to describe it and as we aimed to capture a culturally sensitive picture of CSR education, we have discovered a huge range of CSR synonyms: *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)*, *Business Ethics*, *Corporate Citizenship*, *Sustainability*, *Business and Society*, *Business and Governance*, *Business and Globalization*, *Stakeholder Management*, *Governance*, *Corporate Environmental Management*. The clarification of methodological issues which are used in research:

- What is a “university”? In condition of the CR we mean the name for institutions of higher education – finished with graduates in bachelor, magister, Ph.D. and MBA programs. They could be state-funded or private-funded universities.
- What is “CSR”? There is a variety of labels used in CSR educational courses. Literature overview of the meaning is included in following part of the paper.

Table 1. List of high schools of economic type in the Czech Republic

Type of university	State university	Public university	Private university	Universities with MBA programs
Number of universities	2	20	40	27

Source: Own primary research

As in the CR was not such a study performed and there is no single database that would be listed as individual statistics on objects or taught programs, so we came out a detailed analysis of the individual websites of all schools involved in the research and from the website of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. We

identified institutions with a facility for business education, whether in business schools or in university faculties or departments of management, economics, accounting, administration etc. This yielded 80 institutions but only 20 public universities became the subject of research.

3. Findings

We define the nature of CSR courses in terms both of individual *modules* (semester length courses) and full dedicated *programs* (multiple modules leading to a degree or other award). The variety in the conceptualization of CSR education is illustrated by the fact that in the CR *we have no level and types of CSR programs* (there is no comprehensive program focused on the area of CSR). This was a surprising finding that we do not assumed. Positive findings are in the area of variety in the labels used for *CSR modules* titles (see Table 2). The percentage expresses of use of the selected terms used in the modules. It means that there are specific subjects taught at public universities.

Table 2. Generic labels of CSR modules

Business ethics 32%
Ecological/Environmental Management 28%
Corporate Social Responsibility 21%
Accounting 18%
Corporate Governance 17%
Business and Society 10%
Management/Business; Human Resource Management (all 7%)
Corporate Citizenship; Finance (all 5%)
Sustainable Development 3%
Leadership, Transnational, Geopolitics (all 1%)

Source: Own primary research

CSR itself is used only 21% of universities though is the third most common single title. The first place have “business ethics” 32%, which stems from the historical development of the country, where the term is most often used - according to old habits (does not have the same meaning as in Anglo-Saxon countries). Second position is occupied by a “environmental management” 28%. This aspect is given importance of the EMAS certification and relevant ISO standards 14000. The relative scarcity of modules labelled CSR itself or such close synonyms as corporate citizenship, sustainable development, finance, leadership, transnational – this values suggests that are unlike business ethics and we see as a recent development in Czech business education.

Therefore, it appear as a dynamic platform for teaching a number of current societal issues or management fashions. It is also stringing that there is proliferation of CSR labels generally considered of fringe status from a business school perspective. According to Moon and Matten (2004) from their perspective have to CSR education to make a difference in the future of business it should be in the form neither of a hived-off programme nor an optional module but embedded in the core of business education.

Many CSR teachers and practitioners share this view that CSR should be fully integrated into degree level teaching programmes. This is known as “mainstreaming” and would enable every business student to be made aware of the social and ethical dimensions of their future activities as a businessperson. We offered greater use of these tools in university education: formation of optional modules, embedding in other modules and courses, compulsory modules and other CSR teaching activities (seminars, conferences, special events, workshops, etc.)

We identify the most *teaching tools* used in CSR teaching (see Table 3). There is evidence widespread use of business speakers, NGOs speakers or CSR managers speakers as well as case studies from practical part of business environment (the key role are the large international companies). The tools related to the academic sphere are not so often use, such as e-learning, discussions or international student exchange. This suggests that the CSR teaching is influenced by practice.

Table 3. Special tools used in CSR teaching

Teaching tool	Percentage of using the tool (%)
Business speakers	23
CSR based on case-studies	20
NGO speakers	15
CSR speakers (managers)	10
Communication (media) speakers	4
Other, the most popular:	6
- E-learning	
- Discussion forums	
- International student exchange	

Source: Own primary research

Other areas of research have been focused on the drivers of CSR education not only in universities but in all business schools. The survey invited perceptions of recent and future drivers of CSR business education. Specific drivers of CSR education were identified according to our findings in this order (the most important is in the first place, at least meanings driver is in the last place): individual faculty members; leadership of school/faculty/department; business organizations; students, university leadership; CSR networks and associations; governmental bodies; and society.

In comparison with the future success of CSR teaching is more important focused on the individual faculty members with a research interest or otherwise in CSR. The future drivers of success of CSR teaching in business school we define as business approval and support, required for program accreditation, inclusion in business school ranking, employment success of graduates, governmental incentives.

4. Conclusions

The paper set out to address questions about the extent and the ways in which Czech business education addresses the broad topic of corporate social responsibility. The survey succeeded in gathering data from a wide range of public universities of economic type. There is a highly diverse understanding, contextualisation and packaging of CSR teaching. Although the term CSR, its current agenda items and other current business-society agenda items have gained currency, many modules are grounded in the longer term orientations of business ethics and environmental responsibility.

The variety in the conceptualization of CSR education is illustrated by the fact that in the CR *we have no level and types of CSR programs* (there is no comprehensive program focused on the area of CSR). Positive findings are in the area of variety in the labels used for *CSR modules* titles. Social responsibility reflects the values of the society in which we live and also will live future generation. CSR is not just a matter of business leaders, but

concerns all of us. Educational institutions in the Czech Republic should, therefore, their subjects into the curriculum and to offer their training courses to include far more this issue. One possible approach is seen in the drivers of future success CSR teaching in business schools. Another factor is the support of educational institutions, students - support the work of professional business school students deal with this issue. The key role we see in national and international student's awards.

We can conclude that in the short post-revolutionary history of the country, we see positive development in the higher level of involvement in CSR training modules, but it is necessary to develop comprehensive programs in the bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies. Support from institutions, business sector and the government will be crucial for future success of CSR teaching.

This paper constitutes an important step in providing an overview over CSR education in Czech. It is intended that our findings focus the attention of business schools and their all stakeholders on their CSR education provision and that they provide benchmarks for further research in the area. Future goal of the survey is to intensify research on all four types of universities.

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