

# HRD Roles in Corporate Social Responsibility: The Review of Corporate Social Responsibility Concepts and Practices

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**Abstract:** *Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an important aspect of managing a business in the 21st century. Interests in the role of business in society have been promoted by increased sensitivity and awareness of environmental and ethical issues. An increasing number of companies are adopting a variety of voluntary initiatives associated with improvements in environmental management systems and reporting on social and environmental performance. CSR is an important part of many business organizations. It is concerned with how a company tries to be beneficial to all its stakeholder groups. Many companies today run businesses with CSR especially big companies. They try to involve in activities that will keep both the business and social environment sound. The effects of CSR cannot be overemphasized; they range from companies running business well to environmental improvements. Today, competitors of some businesses already practicing CSR and beginning to embrace this new philosophy of business. The purpose of this article is to promote the awareness and conscious among Chief Executive Officers (CEO), academicians, and all stakeholders to create a positive impact in the society and the environment, provide companies with a guidance what is likely to be emerging over the coming decade and how stakeholders expect businesses to respond, and also to investigate HRD roles in the context of CSR concepts and practices.*

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Responsibility Concepts and Practices, HRD, HRD Roles

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an important aspect of managing a business in the 21st century. CSR has become increasingly more important as a strategic focus in today's workplaces (Lockwood, 2004). Interests in the role of business in society have been promoted by increased sensitivity and awareness of environmental and ethical issues such as improper treatment of workers and environmental problems are of such magnitude that they are global concern (ADB, 2005). CSR is rising rapidly as a corporate priority. By 2011, the percentage of executives giving high priority to CSR is expected to be 70% (Franklin, 2008). An increasing number of companies are adopting a variety of voluntary initiatives associated with improvements in environmental management systems and reporting on social and environmental performance (Baxi, 2005).

Efforts to document and understand the antecedents and consequences of CSR for firms have been a major focus of research in recent years (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Peloza & Shang, 2011). Nowadays, CSR is an important part of many business organizations. It is concerned with how a company tries to be beneficial to all its stakeholder groups. Many companies today run businesses with CSR especially big companies. They try to involve in activities that will keep both the business and social environment sound. The effects

of CSR cannot be overemphasized; they range from companies running business well to environmental improvements. CSR can also go a long way to improve on product quality and service to customers. We wonder how companies run businesses with CSR in an adverse competitive business world. Today, competitors of some businesses already practicing CSR and beginning to embrace this new philosophy of business (Harnrunghalotorn & Phayonlerd, 2012). Aware of and interested in companies' CSR efforts, consumers weight them in their decision-making process. In short, CSR is now a consumer purchase decision criterion (Arli & Lasmono, 2010).

CSR is entering a new era where suppliers from developing countries have significantly increased in importance. It is almost becoming an obligation and responsibly many companies. Companies have an important role in the development of a society and environment because there is high demand in the marketing of products that companies offer product and service quality to their customers. However, companies have the obligations to do practice CSR.

According to study by Visser and Tolhurst (2010) one of the main drivers of increased CSR is growing globalization which brings benefits and disadvantages to economic development throughout the world giving businesses even more decisive role across all levels of society. Globalization has reinforced the relevancy of CSR in business operations. This is because globalization has introduced new challenges and opportunities emanating from increasing linkages between social, political, economical and environmental roles of businesses (Olajide, 2014). A survey conducted by CSM (2001), the perception of companies towards various parameters of CSR has been brought forward. The various dimensions of CSR valued by companies are national wealth, employment, environment and social program including health and literacy. Organizations have been integrating socially and environmentally oriented objectives into their responsibility frameworks to reinforce business strategy as well as to address the concerns of stakeholder groups. There has been much research conducted on the topic broadly defined, but the role of human resources in the CSR arena is still a relatively new and unexplored area of study (Inyang, Awa, & Enuoh, 2011).

The purpose of this article is to promote the awareness and conscious among Chief Executive Officers (CEO), academicians, and all stakeholders to create a positive impact in the society and the environment, provide companies with a guidance what is likely to be emerging over the coming decade and how stakeholders expect businesses to respond, and also to investigate HRD roles in the context of CSR concepts and practices.

## Literature Review

The literature review briefly explores CSR definitions, CSR scope and concept, CSR benefits and outcomes.

### CSR Definitions

The issues of CSR has been defined differently by various CSR developers, academicians and stakeholders, depending on their perspectives and expectation for the outcome of CSR to the society at large. CSR is highly complex and contentious issue among academics and practitioners. There is lack of consensus regarding definition and contents of CSR practices (Dahlsrud, 2008; Dobers, 2009; Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Taneja, Taneja, & Gupta, 2011).

CSR is a company's commitment to operating in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner whilst balancing the interests of diverse stakeholders (Shanmugam, 2013). It is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis (EU Commission, 2001). Carroll's (1991) proposed the CSR model states that four kinds of social responsibilities constitute total CSR was economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic (Carroll, 1979, 1991).

In 2001, Commission of the European Communities defined that the voluntary nature of CSR is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns into the business operations and interactions with the stakeholders. Similarly, CSR is a commitment for sustainable development, ensuring quality of workforces and development of local communities and society at large (Business and Sustainable Development, 2001; World Bank, 2004).

Business in the Community (2010) defined CSR as a company's positive impact on, and amelioration of negative impacts against, society and the environment, through its operations, products or services and through its interaction with key stakeholders such as employees, customers, investors, communities and suppliers. According to Carroll (1983), "CSR involves the conduct of a business so that it is economically profitable, law abiding, ethical and socially supportive. To be socially responsible then means that profitability and obedience to the law are foremost conditions when discussing the firm's ethics and the extent to which it supports the society in which it exists with contributions of money, time and talent" (p.608).

Corporate Social Responsibility Institute in Thailand defined CSR as internal and external practices of a company that recognize the impact to society both at the immediate level (i.e., secondary stakeholders such as competitors, general public) by using the resources within or outside the company to create harmony and happiness in the society. Vincent (2006) suggested that CSR is the continuing commitment by a business to behave ethically and contribute to the economic development, while improving the quality of the workforce as well as the local community and society at large.

From the above definition, CSR entails that companies should give back the benefits to the consumers and other stakeholders. This means that companies should not only be concerned with their profit but they need to help socially and environmentally. If the company doesn't have responsibility with the society, the people or non-government organizations (NGOs) will criticize the company. Thus, companies have to be responsible with other stakeholders and the social environment.

### **The Scope and Concept of CSR**

The concept of CSR is underpinned by the idea that corporations can no longer act as isolated economic entities operating in detachment from the broader society (Shanmugam, 2013). CSR focuses on ethical and moral issue which impact corporate decision making and behavior. CSR is a concept that emphasizes responsive and extended social contribution of businesses to the society (Olajide, 2014). The main purpose of CSR is to ensure that firms are accountable to stakeholders.

Companies engage in CSR for many reasons that include the ability to operate now and into the future by acknowledging areas of harm, risk or opportunity that affect their well-being. In the today's business world, there are many strategies being used to run businesses. In the recent past, the topic of CSR has grown rapidly. People are starting to demand that

companies take their social responsibility seriously. Many companies have started to engage in CSR as a strategy in order to gain benefits that can give them an added advantage over their competitors. There have been increasing numbers of companies engaged in CSR to run their businesses. Nowadays CSR can drive companies to succeed in business by increasing sales volume and brand awareness (Harnrunthalotorn & Phayonlerd, 2012).

According to Porter (2008), the competitive advantage is the components of social and environmental points which have to go together because these are main factors to run businesses. Companies have to use workers, capital and natural resources in order to produce high quality products and services. Employees have to provide knowledge, working condition, welfares and career opportunity while companies and society will get benefits from protecting environment. Since the decreasing waste and pollution will help company to reduce natural resources and increase products including generating customer values and creating a new market.

CSR is a long term strategies for every company or industry. It relates to responsibilities to social, environment, economic which social and environmental CSR's concept is supporting for long run company's benefits. CSR is the best way to communicate with all customers and stakeholders efficiently. As they can touch with values of service brands and the company will receive the good resonances from all stakeholders (Enquist & Edvardsson, 2009). Other scholars argue that business have some obligations and responsibilities towards society; hence, they should do something for the benefit and welfare of the society (Gifford & Kestler, 2008). This is consistent with the assertion of Carroll and Buchholz (2011) who stated that CSR includes economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic expectations placed on businesses by the society. Along with Zadek (2000) suggested that firms engage CSR strategies to protect or defend their reputations; justify benefits over costs; integrate stakeholders into their strategies; and understand, innovate and manage risk.

Many public companies have developed extensive CSR programs designed to generate stakeholder goodwill and boost market value. (McDonald, Lynette, Rundle-Thiele, & Sharyn, 2008). CSR requires companies to consider the interests of all stakeholders including investors, suppliers, consumers, employees and the community in going about its business. (Cronin, 2004)

In general, there is an increasing pressure around the globe from both corporate and societal stakeholders on corporations to engage in the attainment of important social and environmental goals for sustainable development (Alsop, 2005; Franklin, 2008). Furthermore, engaging in CSR initiatives can be very challenging in practice. It seems that most companies struggle to effectively manage their CSR engagement (Bhattacharya, Korschun, & Sen, 2009; Porter & Kramer 2006).

One factor that has made it necessary for companies to integrate CSR into their corporate strategies is the general public's growing interest in and better knowledge of social and environmental problems. With the emergence of public standards for social performance, society is putting companies under strong pressure to embrace CSR and embrace new approaches in their business strategies, such as, for example, green innovation, social entrepreneurship and new models of philanthropy (Pirsch, Gupta, & Grau, 2007).

To summarize, company should comply CSR with the law and regulations, be ethical, and provide societal value and accountability. CSR practices are shaped by the policies, positioning, and programs of the business to promote a positive impact to the social, environmental and financial success of the company, while recognizing the right of the stakeholders, customers, employees, shareholders, communities, and environment in all

aspects of their operations. CSR initiatives do not just involve spending money to become a socially responsible; it also involves a change in business practices and internal operations.

### **CSR Benefits and Outcomes**

CSR has received an increasing amount of attention from practitioners and scholars alike in recent years. Current concept of CSR has turned it into an instrument of achieving competitive advantage, not only on voluntary basis but as a necessity to survive in the competitive markets. CSR enables companies to build better relations with primary stakeholder, such as customers and employees, helping them to develop intangible, valuable assets which can be sources of competitive advantage (Hillman & Keim, 2001). Langford and Smith (2009) shows by listing three profitable CSR areas for business as risk-reduction, financial investing and commercial benefits.

As well as, Hawkins (2006) views the benefits outside profitability as “traditional ethos of ‘profit at all cost’ is wrong, good health and safety supports efficiency, environmental consideration supports community commitment, and responsible management provides investor confidence”. Altogether CSR fulfil all three bottom lines of business for people, planet and profit. The report documents some of the potential bottom line benefits as reducing cost and risk, gaining competitive advantage, developing and maintaining legitimacy and reputational capital, and achieving win-win outcomes through synergistic value creation (Carroll & Shabana, 2010).

Acts of CSR should, for example, increase identification and commitment to the organization, organizational citizenship behaviors, and meaningfulness of work (e.g., Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007; Ellemers et al., 2011; Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008). CSR should also enhance firms’ ability to attract and keep top talent (e.g., Albinger & Freeman, 2000; Greening & Turban, 2000). Shows of CSR make accounting work potentially. There is emerging evidence that effectively implemented, CSR can have significant impact in motivating new entrants, developing and retaining staff.

CSR practices have become a component of business organization that enhance competitive advantage and long-term sustainability (Rodriguez-Melo & Mansouri, 2011; Kemper et al., 2013; Monowar & Humphrey, 2013). CSR benefits both the society and business for improved performance and social reputation (Monowar & Humphrey, 2013; Peloza, 2009). A survey of more than 300 CFOs, investment analysts, and CSR experts reports that the vast majority believe the most important way these programs create value is by enhancing the company’s reputation (McKinsey & Company, 2009) and engendering goodwill among customers. (Chernev & Blair, 2015). A recent McKinsey global survey shows that 76% of executives believe that CSR contributes positively to long-term shareholder value, and 55% of executives agree that sustainability helps their companies build a strong reputation (McKinsey, 2010).

The benefits of CSR for companies, including increased profits, customer loyalty, trust, positive brand attitude and combating negative publicity, are well-documented (Maignan & Ferrell, 2001; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korshun, 2006). CSR is therefore most effective at improving consumers’ attitude towards the company, enhancing consumer loyalty as well as downsizing the level of consumer skepticism, i.e., reducing consumers’ concerns and doubts regarding the company’s products and services (Pirsch, Gupta, & Grau, 2007). Furthermore, research indicates that CSR influences financial performance and market value through factors such as customer satisfaction, and fine avoidance (Webb, Mohr, & Harris, 2008).

## HRD Roles in the Context of CSR

Hittner (2008) suggested that a vision and the average employee is mystified or indifferent. Companies can engage CSR with all employees at every level on things that matter to them. By ensuring that all of employees are part of the solution, companies can tap into new opportunities for innovation, drawing out talents and abilities from they may not even know their employees have. That might take the form of grand challenges where groups collaborate to innovate around a common goal, like developing a new product that has societal or environmental benefits. Or it might be a program in that rewards employees to take individual actions that collectively make a significant difference.

Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD, 1999) has produced standards on ethics and integrity to provide guidance for HRD professionals engaged in practice, research, consulting, teaching, and facilitation. Although these principles are aspiration in nature, also provide standards of conduct and set forth a common set of values. Adherence to these standards builds further definition and clarification of HRD as a profession.

A landmark international CSR study of human resource practitioners conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in 2006, reveals that CSR practices are seen as important to employee morale (50%), loyalty (41%), retention (29%), recruitment of top employees (25%) and productivity (12%) (SHRM, 2007, p. 27). Charoenarpornwattana, Sakulkoo, and Tubsree (2015) suggested the valued human resources for organization as “the company has in place a HRM and HRD policy for every level in order to increase employee’s skills and knowledge, and for the company to have efficient manpower for better organization performance”. Human Resource Practices started from a change in the management’s outlook, from asking how to make employees love the company, and how to make the company loved and admired by the employees. The company started to pay attention to the development of intra-company relationships, in parallel with restructuring and improvement of work methods (Charoenarpornwattana, 2016).

HR managers are well positioned to play an instrumental role in helping their organization achieve its goals of becoming a socially and environmentally responsible firm – one which reduces its negative and enhances its positive impacts on society and the environment. Further, HR professionals in organizations that perceive successful CSR as a key driver of their financial performance, can be influential in realizing on that objective. While there is considerable guidance to firms who wish to be the best place to work and for firms who seek to manage their employee relationships in a socially responsible way, there is a dearth of information for the HR manager who sees the importance of embedding their firm’s CSR values throughout the organization, who wish to assist the executive team in integrating CSR the company’s DNA. Indeed, HR’s mandate to communicate and implement ideas, policies, and cultural and behavioral change in organizations makes it central to fulfilling an organization’s objectives to integrate in CSR activities. It is important to understand that employee engagement is not simply the mandate of HR. Indeed people leadership rests with all departmental managers. HR can facilitate the development of processes and systems; however, employee engagement is ultimately a shared responsibility. The more the HR practitioner can understand their leverage with respect to CSR, the greater their ability to pass these insights along to their business partners towards the organization’s objectives in integrating CSR throughout their operations and business model.

As HR influences many of the key systems and business processes underpinning effective delivery, it is well positioned to foster a CSR ethic and achieve a high performance

CSR culture. Human resource development can play a significant role in all CSR activities. HR can be the key organizational partner to ensure that what the organization is saying publicly aligns with how people are treated within the organization. HR is in the enviable position of being able to provide the tools and framework for the executive team and CEO to embed CSR ethic and culture into the brand and the strategic framework of the organization. It is the only function that influences across the entire enterprise for the entire 'lifecycle' of the employees who work there – thus it has considerable influence if handled correctly. HR is poised for this lead role as it is adept at working horizontally and vertically across and within the organization, so important for successful CSR delivery (Strandberg, 2009).

HRD professionals are aware of their professional responsibilities to the community in which they work and live. The role of HRD managers within organization will be better recognized. An increase in professional courses and better quality, education on CSR will help to increase the understanding of what CSR is and the value of having a CSR function within the organizations. A growth in certification and qualifications around CSR will help to enhance both the professionalism and the credibility of CSR managers, understand a healthy economy, healthy organizations, and a healthy eco-system are intricately interconnected, apply and make public their knowledge of learning and performance in order to contribute to human welfare, concerned about and work to mitigate the causes of human suffering. When undertaking research, strive to advance human welfare, human development, and a sustainable future, avoid misuse of work, comply with the law and regulations, encourage the development of law and social policy that serve the interests of stakeholders, public, society, community, and environment. As well as, encouraged to contribute a portion of the professional time to enhance societal, organizational, human, and environmental development for little of no personal gain or advantage.

## **Recommendations**

HRD purpose is to strengthen human and assisting developing countries in building institutional and organizational capacity through HRD activities by transfer of knowledge and skills, exchange of experience and know-how, training and human capacity building to improve the employee's competencies.

The HRD professional activities will in particular address the capacity development needs of policy makers, requirement of government regulators and direct support will be provided for HRD by CSR activities to responding the needs of countries. This has allowed the HRD professionals to achieve considerable improvements in terms of reaching a larger target population at a lower cost; facilitating the participation of high level staff; delivering and providing the best available training quality; promoting self-development attitudes among the participants, and providing practical schemes for continuous training and development.

Furthermore, companies need to have stakeholder engagement; new look at business models; HRD by increased staff role in contributing to the social and environmental activities; action on climate change; and emphasis on community investment.

## **Conclusion**

This article shows that CSR has important and relevance to a company's profitability in recent years. Companies are recognizing that CSR initiatives represent opportunities for improving profitability through various community, based programs that respond to local

needs, while others are also finding ways to use what there are already doing to gain a CSR related advantage over the competitors. The article also shows that the key to success in using any type of innovation to a company advantage from the CSR perspective.

CSR is not a fad or a passing trend, it is a business imperative that many companies are either beginning to think about or engaging with in one way or another. A successfully implemented CSR strategy calls for aligning these initiatives with business objectives and corporate values thereby integrating CSR across the business functions and enhancing business reputation. The challenge for companies is to apply fundamental business principles to make CSR sharper, smarter, and focused on what really matters.

This can be done by focusing on priorities; allocating finance for treating CSR as an investment from which returns are expected; optimizing available resources by ensuring that efforts are not duplicated and existing services are strengthened and supplemented; monitoring CSR activities closely with implementation partners such as NGOs to ensure that initiatives really deliver the desired outcomes, and reporting performance in an open and transparent way so that all can celebrate progress and identify areas for further action.

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