

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS A TOOL FOR MOTIVATING PRIMARY SCHOOL STAFF IN SOUTH MORAVIAN REGION

Renata Skýpalová

AMBIS College, a.s.
Lindnerova 575/1, 180 00 Praha 8
E-mail: renata.skypalova@ambis.cz

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Abstract:

The role of human capital in every organization, including schools, is unquestionable. To exploit employees' full potential, it is crucial to properly design a motivation system. The present paper focuses on corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities as tools for motivating the staff of selected primary schools in the South Moravian Region. The questionnaire survey took place in 2020 and was attended by 230 teachers from 24 schools. Most respondents (91 %) consider setting the school's goals jointly with respect to all staff's needs as the strongest motivator to perform well, this, however, occurring sporadically in the practice of schools (14 %). The survey results show that knowledge of the CSR concept and the use of its motivation instruments among primary school teachers depend on the size of the school.

Introduction

Elements of corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be traced back to entrepreneurs in the past who were not indifferent to the social conditions of employees and the wider community, taking care of their well-being (an example is the founder of the Bata Shoes company and social innovator of Czech origin Tomáš Baťa). Such far-sighted companies then benefited from the potential of satisfied employees who, with their experience and commitment, contributed to their growth. At the micro level, the main benefits of adopting CSR policies are the competitive advantage, increased employer brand attractiveness and the financial efficiency of eco-friendly activities (sustainable business initiatives such as reducing waste, preventing pollution, recycling, etc.); see Steinová, Václavíková, Mervart (2008). If the company acts proactively, as noted by Kašparová (2015), CSR proves beneficial by reducing risk management costs (implementing measures that eliminate risks in advance, the company bears lower costs than those of handling an already crisis situation).

According to a Harvard study carried out over 11 years, sustainable development is one of the main benefits of applying the CSR concept. The study reports four times higher growth rates and eight times higher employment growth in companies taking an equal approach to all stakeholders compared to those favouring the owners; cf. CSR Network & Radley Yeldar (2012). The increase in employment is related to the preferences of applicants who place the organization's values above the wages offered. CSR-related policies (minimizing the environmental impact, improving working conditions, etc.) affect the company's productivity and employee loyalty.

The education sector also enjoys the benefits of CSR initiatives, such as streamlining school processes and improving relationships between all stakeholders, i.e. the management, teaching staff, pupils/students, parents, the school's founder and the wider community. Petrová et al. (2008) draw attention to the subsequent increase in the reputation of the school, which makes it more attractive not only to students, but also to partners and potential sponsors. It is worth noting that the above-mentioned benefits result from long-term efforts.

In the Czech Republic, the Quality Council under the auspices of the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MIT) has been in charge of CSR strategy development since 2006, establishing a CSR sub-section to coordinate activities at the national level. According to MIT, CSR issues should also be addressed by non-governmental non-profit organizations and state and local self-government bodies as they share responsibility for the social impact of their operations; cf. MIT CR (2014). However, the implementation of CSR policies in the education sector is still a novelty. Currently, the concept of University Social Responsibility (USR) is being developed; see Wigmore-Álvarez, Ruiz-Lozano and Fernández-Fernández (2020). It is argued by Lo, Pang, Egri and Li (2017) that USR should be integrated into the university's strategy and operational procedures.

Many schools are already pursuing some of the CSR activities, such as energy saving, waste sorting and other environmental projects. However, they usually do not have a comprehensive concept to incorporate into the school strategy (school vision and its long-term goals) and to fully utilize in human resource management to promote employee loyalty and motivation.

Despite many research studies on the motivation of public employees having been conducted worldwide, there are only a few papers focusing exclusively on the motivation of pedagogical staff of state-run primary and secondary schools; see, e.g., Mura, Vlacseková (2018).

The present article summarizes the findings from a survey on social responsibility awareness and activities, and the teaching staff's interest in CSR as a motivation tool in selected primary schools in the South Moravian Region.

1. Analytical framework

The paper aims to determine the awareness of the CSR concept in primary schools, the integration of CSR practices into their operations and the staff's interest in motivational use of CSR tools. The results of the 2020 questionnaire survey undertaken in selected primary schools in the South Moravian Region are presented, relevant data having been obtained from 230 teaching staff in 24 schools. The questionnaire contained "yes or no" questions for each of the three problem areas – the knowledge, implementation and motivational performance of CSR-related activities.

To assess the data collected, the following two pairs of alternative hypotheses were examined:

Hypothesis I

H0: Knowledge of the CSR concept depends on the size of the school.

HA: Knowledge of the CSR concept does not depend on the size of the school.

Hypothesis II

H0: Interest in motivational CSR tools depends on the size of the school.

HA: Interest in motivational CSR tools does not depend on the size of the school.
(The school size is measured by the number of teaching staff.)

To evaluate the hypotheses, the chi-square χ^2 test of the respondent's answer dependence on the school size (in terms of the number of teachers – 10 or less, 11–40, 41–70, 71 or more) is applied. The test utilizes two-dimensional data summarized in a contingency table (where r and s denote the number of rows and columns, respectively) according to the following formula:

$$n_{ij} = \frac{n_{i.} \cdot n_{.j}}{n}$$

The probability of (in)dependence of variables can be determined by comparing the empirical and theoretical table. The test criterion χ^2 and degrees of freedom $(r-1) * (s-1)$ are applied –

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^s \frac{(n_{ij} - n'_{ij})^2}{n'_{ij}}$$

All hypotheses are tested at the 5% level of significance.

2. Results and discussion

This section outlines the outcomes of a questionnaire survey of the awareness and implementation of CSR practices in selected primary schools in the South Moravian Region; see Table 1 below. Out of the total number of 230 respondents, only 40.4 % are familiar with the CSR concept, 59.6 % of participants stating that they do not know it. Based on the data obtained, the null hypothesis that the knowledge of CSR depends on the size of the school was tested at the 5% level of dependence. Since the test statistic was lower than the critical value, the null hypothesis was not rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. Familiarity with the concept of CSR depends on the school size in terms of the number of teachers.

The introduction and support of CSR among the teaching staff is the ultimate responsibility of school head teachers. As CSR initiatives are beyond the scope of statutory obligations, it is up to individual headmasters and their assistants whether they acquaint their subordinates with this concept and lead them purposefully to its implementation. Moreover, CSR is part of the strategic management and planning agenda. Large and small schools pursue it with different intensities, the latter managing lower wage and investment budgets (allocated by the government and municipal founders) and paying more attention to operational management.

Table 1: CSR concept familiarity

School size	Yes	No	Σ
10 or less teachers	11	43	60
11 – 40	18	36	60
41 – 70	23	33	62
71 a více	41	25	72
Σ	93	137	230

H0: CSR concept knowledge depends on the size of the school.

HA: CSR concept knowledge does not depend on the size of the school

5% level of significance; chi-square statistic $\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^s \frac{(n_{ij} - n'_{ij})^2}{n'_{ij}} = 15,371;$

critical chi-square value $\chi^2_{20,05}(4) = 7,913$

r – number of rows in the contingency table, c – number of columns in the contingency table

Source: author's own elaboration

Respondents were also asked about 20 socially responsible activities appropriate for primary schools, which are performed voluntarily beyond the statutory obligations. They were divided into three basic areas (1) employment conditions (2) nutrition and health and (3) environmental protection. Participants reported whether their schools adopted individual practices. Irrespective of them being followed or not, the respondents were asked whether their promotion would motivate them to better perform.

First, participants responded to eleven CSR activities related to employment conditions. Only four of them already undertaken by the school were identified by more than half of the respondents – namely activities 1E (support for personal and social development beyond participants’ professional scope; 55 %), 1F (elimination of social differences, conflicts, bullying or discrimination in the workplace; 57 %), 1J (internal processes of work with parents on and after maternity/parental leave; 51 %), and 1K (regular surveys of work environment satisfaction; 63 %); see Table 2 underneath.

Furthermore, all participants answered the question whether the implementation of a particular activity would motivate them to a better work performance, regardless of whether their school already pursues it or not. In seven out of eleven CSR practices, more than half of the respondents indicated that the activity in question was motivating for them. 91 % of participants described 1C activity (school goals are set taking into account the needs and development of all employees) as motivating, its current application, however, being confirmed by only 14 %. A similarly significant difference between the currently undertaken CSR activities and those that the respondents consider as motivational is evident in 1H activity (employees can consult work-life balance topics with a school psychologist) which was seen as a motivator to perform better by 53 % of participants, but its real implementation was confirmed by only 3 %.

Table 2: Performance and motivational impact of socially responsible activities supporting employee conditions (n = 230; in %)

	Our school engages in this activity	Implementation of this activity is/could be a motivator to better perform at work
1A) Employee health care beyond the scope of legal regulations	31	57
1B) Work-life balance support (e.g., part-time employment)	23	35
1C) School objectives are being set with respect to the needs and development of all staff	14	91
1D) Support for employees to volunteer for non-profit organizations	17	33
1E) The school promotes the staff development beyond the professional scope too (e.g., personal and social growth stimulation)	55	73
1F) Social differences, conflicts, bullying and discrimination in the workplace are eliminated	57	59
1G) Together with the teaching staff, the school management regularly evaluates whether the visions and goals in support of socially responsible activities are achieved	9	21
1H) Employees can consult with a school psychologist on work-life balance problems too	3	53
1I) Employees can utilize services such as coaching, mentoring or supervision	19	35

1J) The school has initiated internal processes of working with parents on and after maternity/parental leave, and with employees caring for a close person	51	67
1K) The school conducts regular surveys and evaluates employee satisfaction with the work environment	63	72

Source: author's own elaboration

As motivating are considered activities 1E (support of employee growth beyond the professional scope; 73 % of respondents), 1K (regular surveys and evaluation of employee satisfaction with the work environment, 72%), 1J (facilitation of internal work processes with parents on and after maternity/parental leave or staff members caring for a close person; 67%), 1F (elimination of workplace conflicts, bullying, discrimination or social differences; 59 %) and 1A (health care of employees beyond statutory legislation; 57%).

In the second part of the survey, participants were presented with four socially responsible activities promoting a healthy lifestyle; see Table 3. More than half of the respondents admitted that their schools engaged in none of the monitored practices. The two most often pursued activities – not work motivators, though – are 2A (providing food also to people with special dietary requirements) and 2C (offering meat-free school meals), reported by 47 % and 48 % of respondents, respectively. Activities 2B (supporting staff's physical fitness) and 2D (use of seasonal and local foods), on the other hand, are considered as work motivational factors by most participants – 89 % and 87 %, respectively.

Table 3: Performance and motivational impact of socially responsible activities supporting a healthy lifestyle (n = 230; in %)

	Our school engages in this activity	This activity motivates me to better perform at work
2A) We provide food also to staff members with dietary restrictions (gluton-free diet, etc.)	47	33
2B) We support staff's physical fitness (e.g., group exercises performed in school facilities)	37	89
2C) At least one vegetarian meal is available in our school canteen every day	48	53
2D) We use seasonal and local/regional foods	23	87

Source: author's own elaboration

In the last part of the survey, five CSR practices to enhance environmentally oriented activities were presented to respondents; see Table 4. Only one activity was identified by the majority (71 %) of participants as currently performed at their school, namely 3C (waste sorting in each classroom). However, only a third (33 %) of respondents consider this relatively widespread activity to be motivating for their work performance. 79 % identified activity 3A (participating in environmental projects) and 51 % 3B (use of environmentally friendly cleaning products) as the strongest motivators in terms of ecological concerns.

Table 4: Performance and motivational impact of socially responsible activities supporting environmentally oriented activities (n = 230; in %)

	Our school engages in this activity	This activity motivates me to better perform at work
3A) We get involved in ecological projects	44	79
3B) We use environmentally friendly cleaning products	31	51
3C) We sort waste in every class	71	33
3D) We prevent leakage of heat (e.g., window replacement, house insulation)	45	47
3E) We use technological means to reduce energy waste	11	29

Source: author's own elaboration

3. Implications and recommendations

A recent research carried out in Slovakia among 320 primary and secondary school staff shows that a higher sense of motivation leads to improved job satisfaction; cf. Mura, Vlacseková (2018). Another study of motivational factors in organizations was conducted in parallel in Slovakia and the Czech Republic on samples of 4444 and 2312 respondents, respectively, indicating that the most common requirements of Czech respondents are related to interpersonal relationships; see Hitka, Balážová (2017).

Within the scope of CSR, school headmasters can develop their staff's teaching skills and knowledge beyond standard professional requirements. According to the present research, CSR activities coordinated by the school management are generally assessed by respondents as motivating factors, enhancing the ability to take initiative and affecting their work performance. These practices at their best result in a synergy. They facilitate the development of pedagogical staff in areas other than exclusively professional ones, while acting as motivational tools. This is relatively rare in state primary schools (contributory organizations maintained by municipalities) compared to private companies established to make profit.

Using CSR tools, human resource management in primary schools should foster staff collaboration in designing a common vision. The initiative should not rest solely on the school management, but on common strategy planning of future development, embracing the views and expectations of all stakeholders, i.e. teachers, pupils, parents, municipal founders and the broader community.

4. Conclusion

The present paper deals with the area of social responsibility and its practices followed by schools, increasing a sense of motivation and empowerment among staff members. 24 primary schools in the South Moravian Region having been addressed, 230 respondents completed the survey questionnaire. Since the performance of CSR activities and the overall motivation of teachers in state primary schools has been explored only sporadically so far, the topic of the paper is unique in its focus.

The results of the survey suggest that both knowledge of the CSR concept and interest in CSR motivational tools depend on the size of the school determined by the number of employees. Interestingly, most respondents (91 %) agreed on the motivational power of joint setting school

goals with respect to the needs of all staff (activity 1C), but very few (14 %) stated that this activity was actually undertaken in their school. On the other hand, sorting of waste in classes (activity 3C) or the use of technologies to reduce energy waste (activity 3E) are considered sufficiently motivating by the fewest respondents (33 % and 29 %, respectively).

The present findings can be used by school management in terms of both strategic development planning and extending the range of employee motivation tools. This paper is also a suitable starting point for research into hitherto neglected issue of social responsibility in schools in other regions of the Czech Republic.

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