

The Corporate Social Responsibility Practices and Concerns of Addis Ababa University: Implications for Higher Learning Institutions in Ethiopia

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Abstract

The research aims to understand the corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices by Addis Ababa University, the largest and the oldest university in Ethiopia. The issue of CSR in the context of higher learning institutions is one of the least studied subjects in Ethiopia in terms of what social responsibility considerations a higher learning institution is expected to discharge and what it is actually doing. The research was based on a case study analysis of the oldest public university in Ethiopia. Guided interviews with the academic staff, students, the local communities in the neighborhood of the university, and the management team (university management representative and department heads) of the university were conducted to find out the perceived social responsibilities of the university. The findings indicate that there is still the need for more efforts to improve the social responsibilities of the university. CSR commitments including environmental protection, sustainable use of natural resources, obligations to local communities are areas of concern that the university still needs to address. Case-study replication of higher learning institutions in the country would refine and allow for generalizations of results. The recommendations and suggestions of this research would serve as a basis to reinforce the social responsibilities of higher learning institutions that can go beyond providing education. It can also provide insight to the university authorities to understand the key elements of CSR and assess its social performance. The study contributes to CSR research and is of value to academics as well as authorities in the higher learning institutions.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, Addis Ababa University, Higher learning institutions Ethiopia.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

The issue of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a growing concern and there is an inherent increase of interest in CSR studies and it is gaining much attention (Abdul and Ibrahim, 2002, Thomsen, 2004); the area has become highly relevant (Caner and Banu, 2007, Moir, 2001), and CSR has impacts on an organization's reputation, commitment, and performance, (Goessling, 2011). The core idea behind CSR is that an organization should accept that it must play more than just an economic role in society, (Fred, 2008). CSR involves several matters related to an organization's behavior in its social environment beyond the exclusively economic realms with which companies are traditionally associated, (Parada Daza, 2009).

In other words, CSR is related to issues such as “environmental protection, health and safety at work, relations with local communities, human rights, and corruption” (Proença & Branco, 2014, p.252). Beurden & Goessling (2008) had also found that CSR is an answer to the societal uncertainties that organizations have to cope within the present dynamic, global, and technological social contexts. It can also be designed as part of firms' competitive strategies. CSR as a strategy gives firms a competitive edge, (Zadek, 2006). It needs to be treated as an integral part of firms' competitive strategy; and this approach improves the competitive context without annihilating firms' commitments to the society, (Van de Ven and Jeurissen, 2005).

CSR becomes one of the highly preferred strategies by higher education institutions as well for gaining a good reputation and a competitive advantage, Dahan, and Senol (2012). CSR helps organizations, including universities, to improve on their image. CSR areas that higher learning institutions may consider include economic responsibility, philanthropic responsibility, environmental responsibility, employee wellness and health, and legal responsibility (Asemah, Okpanachi, and Olumuji, (2013).

The main purpose of this research is to understand the corporate social responsibility practices and concerns in the setting of a higher education institution taking the case of Addis Ababa University. The area is one of the least studied subjects in the country in terms of what social responsibility

considerations a higher learning institution is expected to discharge and what it actually is doing.

1.2. Purpose of the study

The research explored the perceived as well as actual social responsibilities of the university towards the society. It examined how CSR is contextually understood in comparison with the definitions proposed in the academic literature. In doing so, the study looks forward to analyze the opinions of employees working in the university, university management, students, and the local community about the university's socially responsible actions. Simeon (2007) identifies the basic aspects of CSR which involve five themes arising from definitions of corporate social responsibility (CSR): responsibility to the community and society; promoting democracy and citizenship; reducing poverty and the inequality between rich and poor; employee rights and working conditions; and ethical behavior.

This study assessed the corporate social responsibility matters in a university setting. The research problem of this focal study was directed to understand the corporate social responsibility issues in Addis Ababa University by studying the corporate social responsibility practices and concerns in the institution. It covered issues that relate to workplace (employees rights and working conditions); environment; community (in reducing poverty and inequality); and ethics (ethical behavior.) The drive of this research project was to gain a basic as well as greater understanding of the corporate social responsibility practices in Addis Ababa University.

In other words, the study drew attention to issues that emerge from the social responsibilities of the higher learning institutions in the country. Its findings provide new insights into the meaning of social responsibility in the sector in the Ethiopian context. Although there are a fairly increasing research publications with the theme of corporate social responsibility, we know very little or less about the underlying CSR practices and concerns among the higher learning institutions in the developing world such as Ethiopia. The study intended to address the current gap in the understanding of issues related to social responsibility by the various stakeholders of a higher learning institution. It is particularly valuable for both the internal and external stakeholders of the university. The findings of the research would fill up the

knowledge gap regarding CSR from this part of the world; as not much is known about CSR in such context. Even though CSR is still in its momentum in academics and practice, Guadamillas-Gómez et al, (2010), in the literature reviewed, the researcher was not able to find many studies regarding CSR in this context of academic institution. Hence this study will be a contribution to the theory and practice of CSR.

1.3 Research Questions

With reference to Addis Ababa University, the following CSR questions can be raised and through the present research are also addressed:

- What role can be played by a higher learning institution in the adoption of CSR practices and what are the contributing and impeding factors in adopting CSR practices?
- What are the corporate social responsibilities of a higher learning institution for its internal stakeholders, both employees and students?
- What are the corporate social responsibilities of the university for its external stakeholders, such as the local community?

1.4 Research methodology

A qualitative research approach is followed. This methodology has “a long history and tradition within organization and management research and provides powerful tools for research in this area” (Cassell and Symon, 2006, p. 4). The qualitative approach to adapted to the inquiry is a case study, and case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system i.e., a setting or a context, (Creswell, 2007). According to Noor (2008), case study is not intended as a study of the entire organization, it’s rather intended to focus on a particular issue, feature or unit of analysis, and this research focuses on the CSR practices of the higher learning institution under the study. Case studies are appropriate research designs to comprehend a contextually contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2003). The researcher’s intention aims at drawing a profound, in-depth and overall picture of the issue as a whole.

The empirical study focuses on the study/ analysis of the CSR practices by Addis Ababa University with emphasis on studying what CSR practices it is undertaking. The literature review is used as a basis for the subsequent data gathering and analyses phases of this research project.

1.4.1. Data Collection

To address the research questions, primary data are used predominantly. In fact, secondary sources comprising of archive records and document analysis are also used. Primary data are new data collected for the current research project which makes the researcher primary user, while secondary data are already existing data which the researcher collected from various books and sources, (Verschuren and Hans, 1999). In other words, the major instrument that is employed to collect the data is interviews. Of course, other relevant sources of data such as document analysis, archives records, and observation are also used; and the data format is textual.

1.4.2. Procedure in data collection

While collecting data, guided interviews were conducted predominantly. This is mainly based on the belief that this approach will allow respondents to describe and analyze their experiences or feelings in their own words without being constrained by any form of framework. The questions sought to probe the topic more deeply. In doing so, the CSR practices of the university as claimed by itself and as witnessed (explained) by the communities, both internal and external were explored.

The respondents who were part of the interview included university administration including top management and heads of department, employees (academic staff), students and members from local community. Respondents were chosen purposefully, based on their knowledge about the subject matter, affected by the university's practices positively or negatively, and related to the university one way or another. In addition to interviews, all available additional documents and archival records of the case organization that relate to CSR were used along with observation in order to enhance the reliability of the gathered data through triangulation in data collection.

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In doing so, the study started with discussion with the top management or a key informant of the University under study to learn their opinions about CSR and actual CSR practices that the university watches over. This has particularly helped in unearthing the meaning of corporate social responsibility in the university. Then the researcher attempted to obtain the opinions of employees, students, local community (neighbors) regarding CSR considerations pertaining to the university under study.

Because the purpose of the study was to obtain the most relevant perceptions of CSR by various stakeholders rather than to present a statistically accurate picture of the understanding of CSR in the Addis Ababa University, the main objective was to include the major stakeholder groups (academic staff, students, and local community) in the case study assuming that they may have had various expectations for the social responsibilities of the university. Some respondents (stakeholders) proved to be more difficult to access than others. Thus policy makers are not represented among the interviewees.

Fifty one interviews were conducted. Interviewees were grouped into two main categories: internal stakeholders (university management, academic staff, and students), and external stakeholders (the local community). Another concern when selecting interviewees was to identifying those individuals who are somehow knowledgeable enough about CSR issues.

Data on the following were gathered:

- Social responsibility policy, or a comprehensive collection of policies that amount to the same thing that the university has,
- Commitment of managers to include social responsibility criteria in decisions,
- The University's commitment to encourage its employees to participate in voluntary organizations,
- Knowledge in the University towards CSR,
- The University's definition of CSR roles and areas,
- Practical help that the University offers to the public

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- The university's dedication to review social responsibility policy and practice on a regular and continual basis,
- The university's relationships with a local government authority, residents' association, or environmental pressure groups related to CSR,
- Compensation and job enrichment programmes to employees,
- Universitwise policy and programme to prevent and redress discrimination against minority; and
- Employees, students, and selected community members views on CSR issues vis-a-vis the university, such as promoting democracy and citizenship, students empowerment and addressing special needs of students.

This research is proposed to be a holistic study that focuses on getting rich information from limited sources. Therefore, the findings are not generalized to the entire education sector in the country. However, it would be one of the pioneer research inputs for other researchers to undertake further research in the area of CSR in Ethiopian context. While learning the perceptions of the university's employees towards its corporate social responsibility, this domain incorporated the views of respondents from the academic wing. Further research will incorporate the views from the administrative wing as well.

1.4.3. Data Analysis

The gathered data were then analyzed qualitatively; and this had been an ongoing process, and unwavering commitment was put in place to constantly relate what the researchers see and hear to the objective of the study and interim conclusions were drawn. In general, the qualitative approach tends to collect rich information about relatively few research units rather than limited information for a large number of research units, (Gayle, 2001). In sum, analysis objectives of this research included describing CSR related experiences, such approaches as describing and explaining relationships is common in qualitative research analysis (Creswell, 2007).

Data analysis suggests that the participants are a typical sample as they reflect opinions shared by their stakeholder group and efforts have been made to reach out and interview those respondents who are knowledgeable about CSR.

Discussions and suggestions for future research are presented in accordance with the achieved understanding of CSR practices and concerns at Addis Ababa University.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

This section clarifies the theoretical resources that the research has drawn on and why the theories are appropriate to this research. This is done in light of the research questions of the proposed study. The research used theories involving corporate governance, stakeholder theory, legitimacy theory, motivation theories of CSR, and stages theories of CSR.

Corporate governance explains the management attitude that has an impact on CSR. The stakeholder theory serves as a the foundation to study the relationships of the institution with its stakeholders, and for the sake of better understanding of why the institutions have to engage in CSR, motivation theories are also included. Stage theories are also part of the theoretical framework as it is both intriguing and relevant to explore what maturity levels of CSR are the chosen institution is currently in. Legitimacy theory explains the importance of CSR in obtaining acceptance and building reputation. This section begins with an overview on the development, meaning and scope of CSR.

2.2. CSR- Historical Development

The term corporate social responsibility has come well to the fore during the later years of the 1990's, even though its origins can be much older (André & Jeurissen, 2010, Halme and Laurila 2009). In earlier writings, it was known more often as social responsibility (SR) than as CSR; perhaps this was because modern businesses were not prominent, Carroll (1999). A good illustration could be Bowen's book - 'Social Responsibilities of Businessman' (1953). The author described the businessman as having obligations to make decisions or

apply policies with desirable outcomes to the society at large. This marked a humble beginning for the development of a body of knowledge, what is today referred to as corporate social responsibility (CSR), and unlike the stakeholder theory (Friedman, 1970) that advocates the responsibility of business is only wealth maximization, CSR literature forward the idea that modern companies today have responsibilities that rise above economic objectives. In this modern and, above all, globalized world with complex and dynamic conditions, the conventional economic premise does not cling to the requirement of the day (Scherer et al., 2006).

CSR covers issues such as “employee relations, human rights, corporate ethics, community relations and the environment” Moir (2001:2). Central to the idea of CSR are businesses which have more than an economic responsibility; it entails a company’s societal obligations (Smith, 2003). Carroll (1991) suggested that CSR incorporates four types of responsibilities: economic- be profitable, legal-obey the law, ethical- behave morally, and philanthropic-be a good corporate citizen. Halme and Laurila (2009) suggested what they referred to as “action oriented CSR typology’ involving Philanthropy, CR integration, and CR innovation. The writers forwarded that “Philanthropy involves emphasis on charity, sponsorships, and employee voluntarism, and CR integration deals with emphasis on conducting existing business operations more responsibly; whereas CR innovation focuses on developing new business models for solving social and environmental problems.”, (pp. 29) . Porter and Kramer (2006), in their article on society and strategy, have come up with an insight that can help in assessing CSR practices of organizations with respect to employees and employment matters. What they have called the “inside-out” linkages include, among others, education and job training, safe working conditions, compensation policies, and layoff policies.

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD¹) defined CSR as “the continuing commitment by business to contribute to economic

¹ The WBCSD is a CEO-led organization of forward-thinking companies that galvanizes the global business community to create a sustainable future for business, society and the environment. Source: <http://www.wbcSD.org/about.aspx>, retrieved on April 13, 2014)

development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the community and society at large." This entails that businesses have not only economic responsibilities but also responsibilities to the members of the society both within and outside the organization involving social, environmental and ethical responsibilities. Likewise, the EU Com² (2011:6) defined CSR as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society and is a process to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders". Thus based on the notions explained here, this paper considers CSR as a set of organizations' economic, social, environmental and ethical responsibilities to its employees, markets, communities, and the environment in the territories they operate.

2.3. Corporate Governance and CSR

Management attitudes have an impact on CSR. There is a need to integrate the social responsibility matters in the management of organizations. One of the ways that management might impact CSR is through corporate governance. For any program to be successful it must have the support of the top management. As such, the top management can play a significant role in creating a climate of socially responsible behaviors of the organization, Sharma et.al (2009) .

Corporate governance is a term that refers broadly to the rules, processes, or laws by which businesses are operated, regulated, and controlled, (ibid).Hence CSR is embedded in Corporate Governance (CG). Social responsibility must be built into the management structure and processes of the organization so that, as far as possible, all social responsibility issues are foreseen, covered by corporate policy, and dealt with in a way that shows an understanding of the issues involved and a willingness to help solve societal problems, thus CG is a critical element for driving excellence in CSR, Arash & Mohamed (2007).

² Communication from the Commission to The European parliament , The Council, The European Economic and Social committee of the Regions : A renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility

The OECD, which released its Principles on Corporate Governance in 1999, also claims that good and effective governance helps to strengthen democracy and human rights, promote economic prosperity and social cohesion, reduce poverty, enhance environmental protection and the sustainable use of natural resources and deepen confidence in government and public administration (OECD, 2004).

2.4. Stakeholder theory

The stakeholder theory will serve as a basis to study the interactions of the focal companies of this research with their stakeholders. It will be useful to identify stakeholders of the case under the study, to describe the corporate characteristics of the case, and more importantly to explain to what extent the case institution is applying either the instrumental or the normative attitudes or both towards the relationships it has with its respective stakeholders, Donaldson and Preston (1995). “The stakeholder theory of the firm can be used as a basis to analyze those groups to whom the firm should be responsible” Moir (2001:8), and it is a fundamental element of CSR, Al-Shubiri et.al (2012). Increasingly corporate boards of directors find themselves in a position to assess the impact of social issues on stakeholder value, Petersen and Vredenburg (2009). At the very least, there is growing view that business is part of the larger society and, therefore, it has responsibilities other than simply maximizing profits, Oketch (2004).

The idea is businesses need to deal with those individuals, groups, or firms, or any entity that influence the business itself or are influenced by the decisions and operations of the businesses; be it economic stakeholders or social stakeholders (Jeurissen, 2007). In the words of Freeman, stakeholders include managers, suppliers, employees, financiers, stock holders, and local communities; and businesses shall be managed in consideration of the interests of its stakeholders (Freeman:1984) and embracing stakeholders is one of the qualities of responsible companies. The stakeholder theory championed by Freeman says that the” modern corporation is no more a legal device to be used as an instrument for individuals to undertake private business transactions, and its stakeholders are not to be taken only as a means to some end, instead stakeholders must participate in determining the future direction of the

business“, (Freeman 1984:38). Stakeholder theory has useful aspects for CSR studies in order to explain companies’ behavior and their relationship with stakeholders.

2.5. Motivation Theory of CSR

Vogel (2005) stated that there are “many reasons why some companies choose to behave more responsibly or virtuously in the absence of legal requirements. Some are strategic, others are defensive, and still others may be altruistic or public-spirited.”, (p 2). That indicates that even in countries where there is no a strong legal framework for CSR, companies can implement CSR for reasons other than government requirements. Graafland & Mazereeuw (2012) identified three motives for CSR, the first one is financial motive as an extrinsic driver and the second one is ethical and the third is altruistic; the latter two are considered as intrinsic motives. Van de Ven and Jeurissen (2005) found that CSR needs to be treated as an integral part of companies’ strategy. Porter and Kramer (2006) also proposed that CSR can be used as a source of great social progress. Thus, based on the theories here, the motivation for CSR could be intrinsic- such as based on ethical duties or extrinsic, focusing on external drivers such as regulatory requirements or profit motive.

2.6. Stages Theory of CSR

In order to explain what level of CSR is a given organization in the maturity steps of CSR, stage theories are relevant. According to Zadek (2004) there are five steps that organizations go through as levels to CSR maturity: the defensive stage, compliance stage, managerial stage, strategic stage, and civil stage. The defensive stage is characterized by a situation that companies be given unanticipated criticism and the companies are inclined to consider legal options or a PR strategy to handle the problem. Reaction often manifests in a form of rejecting the accusations or denying any link between the companies operations and the unwanted outcomes. In the compliance stage companies show effort mainly to comply by designing policies that help to please criticisms. The aim is usually to uphold company image and keep legal accusations away. At the managerial stage, companies admit to the reality that the problem lingers, and something real needs to be done; thus the companies assume responsibility along with commitment for a lasting solution. In the civil

stage, that is the last stage, companies go beyond taking responsibility and start to promote a cause in order to prevail upon other companies in the industry to get involved in order to better serve the society responsibly together.

2.7. Legitimacy theory

Legitimacy theory implies that organizations continually seek “to ensure” that “their activities are acceptable” to the society (Wilmshurst and Frost, 2000:11). Since an organization relies on societal resources that can be put into alternative uses, society evaluates the usefulness and legitimacy of the organization’s activities (Parsons, 1956, noted in Tsang, 1998:631) and hence the need to practice such activities with the sole purpose of enhancing its legitimacy. Therefore, it might be self-destructive for the organizations in the long run if they ignore societal problems. It, therefore, is important that organizations are committed to fulfilling their legal responsibilities and ethical or moral obligations at the level of society (Papasolomou-Doukakis et al., 2005:263).

3. Research results

3.1. Data analysis

The interview transcript data and other documentation related to the study have been analyzed using the qualitative analysis method of categorization and sub categorization (Yin, 2003, Miles and Huberman, 1996). These categories were used for coding the interview transcripts and the contents of the various documents (Miles and Huberman, 1996). The codes were used to identify respondent’s descriptions of their expectations and understanding of the responsibilities of Addis Ababa University and understanding of how respondents constructed this meaning.

3.2. Findings

Eight major themes emerged as critical in the notion of CSR within Addis Ababa University. These are:

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1. The meaning and understanding that the university has about corporate social responsibility.
2. The university's claim of its social responsibility practices to its employees.
3. The university's claim of its corporate social responsibilities to its students beyond providing basic education.
4. The university's claim of its corporate social responsibilities to the public in terms of philanthropic and community services as well as environmental protection.
5. Employees' perception of the corporate social responsibility of the university towards them.
6. Students' perception of the corporate social responsibility of the university towards them.
7. The public's perception of the corporate social responsibility of the university towards it.
8. Externalities, these are the factors that Addis Ababa University cannot control or influence itself.

Each of the identified themes is explained below.

3.2.1. The meaning and understanding that the university has about corporate social responsibility

The meaning and level of understanding that the university has about corporate social responsibility is learnt by explaining specific questions including a) whether the university has social responsibility policy incorporated in its corporate governance, or a comprehensive collection of policies that amount to the same thing that the institution has, b) whether there is practical commitment of managers to include social responsibility criteria in making decisions, and c) whether there is any acquired knowledge in the University towards CSR.

Findings indicate that the idea of CSR is not understood and taken by the university in its strict form of CSR, instead it is understood, taken and implemented through what the university calls "Community Service" involving activities such as research, training and consultancy as ways to its responsibilities to the community. Thus, community service is taken seriously as a mission by the university to discharge its responsibilities.

This mission of community service was started five years back (2009/2010) following the structural change implemented in the university through BPR in order to improve the services and performance of the university. The university has a community service policy to reach out the society with three major streams: university-industry partnership, technology and knowledge transfer (outreach) programs, and training and consultancy. The industry-university partnership program focuses on providing support to the industry to improve the performance of various industries. One recent and remarkable partnership was the university's partnership with the agro-food processing industry of the country, whereby the university approached the firms in the industry to help them improve their productivity. It helped identify their problems that are of mainly related to planning, management and access to market and suggested solutions to alleviate their problems.

Under the technology and knowledge transfer (outreach) stream, the university makes any technology and knowledge available to the public so that users can benefit from it. It hosts exhibitions to display and transfer technologies in collaboration with the science and technology commission of Ethiopia.

The training and consultancy stream works on providing customized training to different organizations throughout the country. The university generates innovation, knowledge, and technology that aim at bringing change to the society at large. Social organizations, non-governmental organizations, and governmental organizations are parts of the society that are informed about the innovation, knowledge, and technology that the university generates.

3.2.2. The university's claim of its social responsibility practices to its employees

The university's claim of its social responsibility practices to its employees has been explored on the bases of issues such as pay, working conditions(working environment), employees participation in decision making, encouraging employees to participate in voluntary organizations, job security, job enrichment, empowerment and commitments that prevent and redress discrimination against minority.

With this regard, findings indicate that the employees are not offered attractive

pay and they are not encouraged to participate in voluntary organizations. It's also found that job security is not a major problem as long as the employees perform their duties and responsibilities. The university has implemented mechanisms to empower employees and prevent and redress discrimination against minority through discipline committee, ombudsman, Ethics officer, and anti-corruption committee and the university encourages employees to participate in decision making either through general meetings or college level or department level discussions. However, not much is done by the university to make employees jobs attractive in terms of job enrichment.

3.2.3. The university's claim of its corporate social responsibilities to its students

This theme is focused on understanding what the university claims it is proud of in terms of social responsibility considerations towards its students. What support does the university offer to its students that go beyond providing basic education such as in areas of scholarship, placement, special needs, empowering students, and making them better citizens.

With this respect, findings indicate that the university provides counseling service to students to help them solve problems that trouble them. The university provides support to its students if the issue relates to gender; the gender related support usually takes the form of scholarships to female students. The university offers gender special support, support for disabled students, and grants to Masters students in terms of research fund and scholarship. It tries to empower students through counseling, club membership such as Environment club, and students are also encouraged to form associations.

Addressing the issue of the level of awareness regarding special needs of students and what efforts have been done to reach students with special needs, findings indicate that the awareness is rising, the university has special needs and inclusive education program that teaches and advocates inclusion and there is lobbying to consider the needs of students with special needs particularly in the construction of buildings to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. Even though the practice is in its early stage, the awareness is rising.

With respect to efforts to make students become better citizens, the university

offers relevant courses such as ethics and civics courses in many of its programs, and there is also a culture of hosting seminars, panel discussions and debates on issues of national concerns.

3.2.4. The university's claim of its corporate social responsibilities to the public

This theme revolves around the issue of what practical corporate social responsibilities are discharged by the university to the public. Some of the specific issues include support to the community and the environment. Efforts to strengthen democracy and human rights, to promote economic prosperity and social cohesion, to reduce poverty, to enhance environmental protection, and to the sustainable use of natural resources are explored.

In line with strengthening democracy and human rights, the university has launched new programs such as peace and security, federalism studies, in addition to and the long established political science and international relations program. There is also a new center for child education and child right that is designated to protect the rights of children. Moreover, there are debates as well on national issues such as election.

With respect to the issue of what has the university done to promote economic prosperity and social cohesion, the study found out that the university accomplishes this through agencies, training and consultancy. Moreover, educating citizens is also understood as a contribution to economic prosperity. Speaking of poverty reduction efforts, there is a program designed by the university to arrest the practice of begging, by including this social group and direct the beggars to a productive line through job creation. This is a program to be implemented through the outreach program of the university as a community service.

The other aspect in this category is what has been done by the university to enhance environmental protection. With this regard, the university undertakes environmental impact assessment of different industries and officers trainings in the area. This is mostly done by the environment and development center. This center also undertakes researches that focus on environmental issues, with frequent seminars, trainings and long term degree program in the area of environmental protection. Moreover, it has linkages with the environmental authority, Ministry of Agriculture, NGOs and conducts training, workshop, and

seminars aiming at nurturing the environment.

In line with the sustainable use of natural resources, the study reveals that the university has a commitment to sustainable use of natural resources and to this end it has prepared training manuals to offer trainings to various institutions in the country on sustainable natural resource management.

3.2.5. Views from some Department Heads

Ten department heads were approached to express their views on CSR and CSR commitments at departmental level. Findings show that the level of understanding of CSR is very minimal. The study shows that there is no developed knowledge of CSR across the departments, nor do they have clearly defined their CSR areas or responsibilities. Not much effort is considered to incorporate CSR programs within departmental programs (strategies). They lack placement programs, facilitating opportunities for employees to participate in voluntary organizations, and protection of the environment. Findings indicate that there are no initiatives taken at departmental levels towards CSR commitments. Even endeavors to create a strong link with the industry, and/or the public are found to be at a very early stage. The departments still need more efforts to include social responsibility criteria in their strategies as well as in their decision making process.

However, encouraging results are found among the departments in participating employees in decision making through regular meetings, empowering employees by letting them take part in various committees, and in terms of transparency and flow of information. Departments' commitment in supporting different extracurricular activities of students such as sports activities and cultural events is also a positive achievement. Findings also indicate that the departments are doing well in empowering students. All of them have student affairs committees whereby students are members together with the staff of each department and actively participate in those committees in deciding over students affairs. Moreover, there is a permanent representation of students in the Academic councils of Colleges, Schools and faculties. These are potent tools in empowering students through decision making.

3.2.6. Employees' perception of the corporate social responsibility of the university towards them

The employees' opinion regarding pay, participation in decision making, attractiveness of working environment, institutional support for professional development, job enrichment, job security, working conditions, empowerment, and opportunities to voluntary services have been found to be major issues of analysis.

The findings of the study indicate that while there are some positive scores on job security and working conditions, some areas of concern still remain unaddressed. Areas of concern include less attractive pay, lack of participation in voluntary services. More efforts are needed to empower employees in decision making, facilitating institutional support for professional support as well as enriching the employees' jobs. Creating a better and more stimulating work environment is one of the CSR considerations of organizations, (Anon 2002). Results show that most employees are still worried about the level of payments, the nature of the job, and the degree of participation in decision making. Findings show that the level of payment is not considered high considering the factors such as the cost of living, their level of education, as well as that of the labor market. Complaints of employees over compensation policies deserve to be considered. If there is a single spot that respondents from this category (employees) have never complained about is job security; the fear of losing the job is not there at all.

3.2.7 Students' perception of the corporate social responsibility of the university towards them

This section of the research presents the findings of the research regarding what the students, as one of the stakeholders' group of the university, owe to the University for its socially responsible actions towards them. Findings indicate that the university is doing the best it can in promoting democracy and citizenship among the students of the university. It is noted that students are well represented in the university from the lowest level to the highest level in the university, and that gives them the freedom of expression as well as becoming part of the decision making organ in the university. Most of them affirm that they have class representatives, school representative as well as the student council to make their voices heard and participate in decision making.

Findings show that the student council members from all campuses/schools/faculties of the university are actively working for the best interest of the students. It is also indicated that the university's commitment in organizing cultural events and other programmes that encourage the participation of students have helped the students' community to experience a range of Ethiopian cultures, appreciate the diversities of the students backgrounds and unite together with an inspiring motive. Findings have also indicated that courses such as civics education are found to be very useful in promoting citizenship, and deepen confidence in government and public administration.

However, when it comes to addressing special needs the vast majority of the student respondents have disclosed that even though "special needs" occurs in different forms and types, they did not believe that the university has properly accounted for such needs. They mentioned that talking in terms of special needs in a form of physical disabilities only, leaving other forms of special needs, what is done is not enough.

Example 1. I have a disability, and whenever class-schedules are prepared, no concern is given to my problems and I often face problems to attend my classes in class rooms. I can hardly go there. Most classes and halls do not accommodate my need to use my wheel chair and make myself available there for class room lectures as well as writing my examinations.

Some new buildings have the facilities that are appropriate for students with disabilities. However, I do not think that the entire compound is designed and built considering the needs of those students with physical disabilities into account. More improvements are needed in this regard.

I do not think that there is even a great deal of awareness of the special needs among the university community leaving alone addressing the needs. I am afraid we are way behind in properly understanding and addressing issues of special needs in the university.

3.2.8 The public's perception of the corporate social responsibility of the university towards it

The CSR literature is not clear precisely how widely “society” is defined in terms of the size of the community to which the organization is, or should be, responsible (Wood, 1991: 701). For the purpose of this research, the public that lives around the neighborhood of the university's campuses are considered as the society; the public- as a point of starting. Further research works might expand the scope of the definition of “society”.

Learning the public's perception of the corporate responsibility of the university has been such an enormous challenge because of the immensity of this domain. A narrow section of the public has been considered. The researcher inquired those communities in the neighborhood of the university (main campus) to learn what the university has done for those members of the community who live in its vicinity. The respondents were also drawn from those small vendor shops that have mushroomed round the university's compound. The researcher wishes to refer to these groups as the public in the neighborhood. What you can do to those who are within your reach is believed to be an indicator of one's commitments to those sectors of the public who are somehow farther.

The majority of respondents who live in the neighborhood of the university have disclosed that apart from seeing this big university being there in the neighborhood, they have never heard and seen any philanthropic or community services being delivered to them by it. They said that they have never been reached out through community services. All of them have responded that they have never received any socially responsible deeds from the university. Findings show that there is no any form of social responsibility activities be in terms of environmental protection, or philanthropic consideration.

Owners of small vending shops around the university have two types of reactions. On the one hand, they are grateful that they are in business because of the university. The university community, both the staff and the students are the source of their livelihood. Had the university not been there, they wouldn't be able to run their business. On the other hand, they reiterated that even though they have been part of the job creation process, they have never been approached and provided professional support by the university with respect to managing and developing their business.

The university being the prime source for many small businesses to bud around is a great opportunity for small business owners. It is found out that the university community has happened to be a big source of business for the small businesses surrounding the university compound, almost in all its campuses in Addis Ababa. The university still needs to do more in ensuring its legitimacy to the society by offering more philanthropic and/or community services including environmental protection and financial help.

3.2.9 Externalities

These are some external factors that Addis Ababa University cannot control or influence. The interviewees have identified one main externality: these are the national policy issues or legislations which the university only complies with.

4. Discussion and suggestion for future research

4.1 Discussion

The meaning and understanding of corporate social responsibility are found to be context specific. It is not dependent only on the perceptions of the authorities of the university but also is on the nature of the organization and the level of awareness that the nation itself has about corporate social responsibility. It is found out that the subject matter itself is in the early stage of its evolution at the organizational level. However, there are some indicators that the idea of corporate social responsibility is fairly accepted and the university acknowledges its value as well as its importance in spite of lack of a complete implementation of corporate social responsibility programmes that can successfully reach out its stakeholders. At this stage it is difficult to conclude that there exists a well developed CSR knowledge/system in Addis Ababa University.

The study further tried to assess CSR issues by exploring the views of employees, students and members of the local community. Some factors are still keeping employees less than pleased. Most employees are still worried about the level of payments, the nature of the job, and the degree of participation in decision making. Findings show that the level of payment is

not considered given factors such as the cost of living, their level of education, as well as that of the labor market. Complaints of employees over compensation policies deserve to be reconsidered. In fact the university cannot directly decide on the salary schemes of its employees as that is done by the government. If there is a single spot that respondents from this category (employees) have never complained about, it is the matter of job security; the job losing fear is not there at all.

Empowering one of its stakeholders- students- is found to be of a sound achievement. However, incorporating practices that require addressing special needs of students are still areas that require attention. Besides, responsibility to the community (such as local community) based on assessment of what the community needs and expects from the university is again crucial. Findings indicated that the local community expects more from the university in terms of CSR commitments that go beyond providing education to the students. They feel less satisfied with the philanthropic as well as community service activities.

Generally, as most literatures suggest on what must be done regarding CSR commitments of organizations, this leading university in the country should be even exemplary in executing tasks that relate to promoting democracy and citizenship, reducing poverty and inequality between rich and poor, and ensuring that employee rights are protected.

4.2. Implications for Higher Learning Institutions

Such studies will have particular importance for other higher learning institutions both the public and private universities. CSR could be a platform to discharge social responsibilities in terms of philanthropic, innovative and responsible ways for undertaking their operations. Private higher learning institutions which are expected to overcome competition may use CSR as a strategic tool to build their reputation, and in this sense CSR serves as a powerful source of competitive advantage and it helps ensure their legitimacy, (Melewar and Akel, 2005). After all, undertaking social responsibilities has

been recognized as an essential device for organizations towards ensuring the long-term continued existence (Habib-Uz-Zaman, 2010).

4.3. Suggestions for Future Research

Reproducing this case study research in other higher learning institutions across the country would be principally interesting to learn how corporate social responsibility is perceived and practiced by those higher learning institutions that are spread throughout the country and to come up with some comparative conclusions. Finally, since societies expect something noble and grand from higher learning institutions, future research could examine more thoroughly the social responsibilities of higher learning institutions in the country and that could enable our higher learning institutions to learn from one another and develop a sound CSR system that can benefit their communities beyond providing education.

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