

The linkage between human resource development intervention and corporate social responsibility: An overview and research agenda

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to focus on the linkage between Human Resource Development (HRD) Intervention and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In this paper, CSR will be investigated from the aspect of perception. Nowadays, the lack of understanding about CSR has caused the perception towards CSR becoming less attractive and it has caused poor CSR implementation in organizations in which, indirectly, affecting employees' interest in working with their employer. This is because most employees prefer to work with organizations that implement CSR. Hence, the HRD need to interfere by implementing training and development in order to improve positive CSR perception among employees and help the employees in understanding CSR better. This paper intends to suggest a tentative research agenda and offer direction for future researcher. The systematic and critical research approaches are applied to examine the linkage between HRD intervention and CSR in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). This paper proposes the conceptual framework that assimilates the HRD intervention and CSR.

Keywords:

Human Resource Development (HRD) intervention, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

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1. Introduction

In this new era, where the technology improvement took place in business field, there is an attraction among the business practitioners to acts legally and ethically to the society. CSR perceived into an important topic in today's business landscape. It became one of the business concepts and has been accepted widely [1]. CSR means something that known as a very broad concept which is complicated, active and also voluntarily contribute to environmental, social and economic improvement from the enterprises [2]. Sekajipo [3] defined CSR as a combination of corporate activities that goes beyond corporate profit motives. Besides, CSR observed as a dynamic platform

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for organizations to perform their contribution to the society. A part of that, most of academicians and practitioners started to show concern and interest on CSR activities. Higher educational institutions such as university have become one of the responsible figures in spreading the social responsibility ethical as to remain sustainable in the future. CSR's best connector is HRD; CSR could only be connected by organization management practices such as HRD [4]. HRD can play an active role in creating ethical business cultures and achieving sustainability and CSR related objectives [5]. Therefore, the HRD should be proactive and continuously encourage, educate and leading the important role of CSR practices. In particular, this paper aims to investigate the relationship between HRD intervention and CSR. In this paper, CSR will be investigated from the perspective of perception. The issue of this study is raised due to the less effectiveness of HRD on social responsibility motives. Thus, the implementation level is getting weak and could be attributed to the lack of understanding among citizens, poor level of motivation to participate, fewer skills, less attractiveness towards organization, and lack of awareness on CSR among employees. The relationship between HRD intervention thru training and development and CSR perception could be influence by social learning theory. According to Merriam and Caffarella [6], social learning theory is identified in the adult learning literature as one of five traditional theories of adult learning and as a metatheory of learning for human resource development (HRD) [7]. Social learning theory is a theory of learning and social behavior which proposes that new behaviors can be acquired by observing and imitating others [8]. The employees are able to imitate and learn about CSR through training and development organized by HRD. Moreover, the employees will have a positive perception toward CSR and encouraged to involve in CSR activities in their working place. Scholars explained that CSR and HRD have been widely emphasized in research fields. However, the relationship between these two variables remains low [9]. This research suggests that initiating HRD intervention through training and development could encourage the CSR in a positive way, and eventually stimulate the level of CSR implementation.

1.1 Concept of CSR

According to Carroll [15], Bowens work was specifically concerned with the doctrine of responsibility. Due to his early and seminal work, Carroll named Howard Bowen as "Father of Corporate Social Responsibility". Bowens' book is portrayed as the most extraordinary literature from the 1950s. However, the decade of 1960s marked a significant growth in an attempt to formalize, or more accurately in defining what CSR means. One of the first and most noticeable writers in that period to define CSR was Keith Davis. Davis [16] defined CSR as the ability of organizations to make decisions and actions which are taken at least partially beyond the firms' direct economic or technical interest. He also mentioned that social responsibility is a nebulous idea and should be seen in a managerial context.

1.2 Concept of HRD

Over the past century, HRD was depicted as a strategy in developing manpower with skills by Nadler and Nadler [17]. They had defined HRD as a series of well systematic activities which are designed to produce changes in behavior within a specific period of time. Moreover, Nadler and Nadler [17] observed HRD based on four main components which are employee education, employee training, employee development and employee non-development. However, the major role of HRD have been searched deeply in order to ensure the development in employee, development of organization, career management, and performance management for potential employee [18]. The recent work done on HRD by Swanson [19] explained HRD as a process that is developed to enhance

the performance of an organization by incorporating the organizational development and training as to further enhance the human expertise. According to Poojitha and Rama Devi [20], HRD is also known as an intervention that implements training and development in order to nurture employees' skills and knowledge. Training and development is a subsystem of an organization. It ensures that randomness is reduced and learning or behavioral change takes place in a structured format. The training system in Indian Industry has been changed to create a smarter workforce and yield the best results [20]. According to Ensour and Kharabsheh [21], the terms 'training' and 'development' often appear together, and are sometimes used interchangeably and serve in different purposes.

Furthermore, there are several studies done with arguments on the differences between HRD and Human Resource Management (HRM) and their relative positions in an organization. The term HRM started to emerge during the 1800s at the same time as "Personnel Management" term was introduced [22]. After the World War in 1945, the term "Personnel Management" emerged as an approach to differentiate from other functions and acts as a management function in an organization. Yet, due to the evolving technology, growth in organizations, increase in the attention of public policies, and the rise in unions and government concern, the term HRM had evolved in the 1980s [23]. HRM involved processes and practices to attract, develop and retain the human resources in the organization [24]. Based on this fact, HRM was defined as a unique approach established to give competitive advantages through the engagement of highly committed and competent employees using various techniques [25]. Because of the growing attention among organizations to enhance employee development, maintaining, and motivating human resources, there have been arguments among scholars regarding the evolution of the term HRD [26][27].

Blake [26] suggested that HRD began in the early 1930s and was derived from the concept of organizational development. Stead and Lee [28] contended that during the 1950s and 1960s, HRD began to exist and many theories related to employee development were universally recognized and published by psychologists. Moreover, Stead and Lee [28] suggested that HRD is not only of training, but also about enhancing the motivation and development as stated by organizational psychologist Blake [26]. On the other hand, in between 1960s and 1970s, organizations began to acknowledge the importance of trainers in which their role was spread beyond classroom training to coaching and counseling the employees [29]. Consequently in the early 1980s, Nadler and Nadler [17] have proposed the term of HRD which has been approved by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD). ASTD has widened the role of trainers by including various interpersonal skills mentoring, coaching, problem solving, group process facilitation and others [29]. According to Tseng and Mclean [30], HRD professionals started to take their responsibility seriously and believed it may support the enhancement of employees' productivity and achieve company goals and its objectives efficiently [30].

1.3 The linkage between HRD and CSR

According to Garavan and McGuire [9], there is a correlation between the aims of HRD and CSR. Furthermore, Garavan and McGuire [9] also stated HRD as a powerful weapon, expected to play a facilitative role in CSR as well as creating awareness regarding social responsibility issues among employees and encourage them to be involved in social responsibility activities. One of the study suggested that HRD has a major role to play in helping organizations to achieve CSR, sustainability, and ethical goals [32]. It can perform a number of significant activities in the context of these areas. HRD also can raise awareness of employees and develop positive attitudes toward sustainability, environmentalism, and green work practices [9]. In fact, it is well demonstrated that investment on HRD can have some control on business, social, and environmental performances [32-35]. As

mentioned by Sukserm and Takahashi [36], the term “HRD for CSR” used by researchers is one of a strategic development method that act as a useful mechanism in promoting CSR in an organization. Therefore, based on previous studies, there are some possibilities for HRD having significant relationship with CSR. Chong [37] noted that in bringing the CSR to fruition, the management support plays an important role in managing and engaging the entire organization towards envisioning the CSR culture in practice. Pedersen [38] stated that managers should have strong positive attitudes in participating and contribution towards CSR activities as it may enhance the participation among members. Empirical research also has shown that there is a correlation between active provisions from management towards CSR [39].

This study investigates HRD intervention through training and development. Training refers to the abilities of an organization to provide employee with the learning relating to their work related competencies. However, it is crucial for employees to possess these competencies such as their abilities, knowledge, and skills that could potentially create success in performance [40]. In this regard, by giving training it may enable employee to create working condition that encourages continuous learning on CSR. According to Friedman [41], in order to add organizational value, the HR must play a crucial role in strengthening their actions to build employee competencies and motivation that in turn influence company reputation. In regard to this, by providing training and development, it may benefit the academics, social and community development [42]. According to Garavan and McGuire [9], active involvement of HRD in CSR through training and development for the managers and employee may allow the staffs to gain competitive advantage that could developed a culture which focuses on societal issues. This is also supported by Abdullah [42], that the integration of HRD and CSR may promote potential development in an organization through three facets such as individual development, performance improvement and organizational development.

Garavan and McGuire [9] reported that HRD may play significant role in this issue. They also contended that through the intervention of the HRD, it may make a long-lasting and important contribution to CSR [9]. This is because HRD is understood as a set of practices to help organizations to engage in CSR activities [43]. According to Lam and Khare [44], HRD is believed to be the most appropriate role in leading the implementation of CSR activities. Swanson [45] defined HRD as “a process of developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personal training and development for the purpose of improving performance” (p.208). Therefore, it was clearly stated that HRD as having the capability to play an important role in shaping human expertise as well as able to contribute to the society, environment and economic goals. Increasingly, there have been many responses in stating that human capital as a critical aspect or factor in these evolving business environments. Hence, HRD should take their role in creating a culture that concerns more on societal issues [9].

1.4 Conceptual Framework

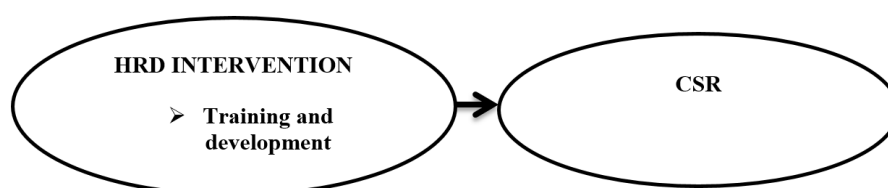


Fig. 1. conceptual framework of research

This study will be conducted based on proposed conceptual framework above. This study will be investigating the relationship between HRD intervention (training and development) and CSR. The objective of this study is to identify the relationship between HRD intervention (training and development) and CSR. In this paper, CSR will be investigated from the perspective of perception.

2. Research Design

In this study we attempt to make a connection between HRD intervention and CSR. Due to this, it is crucial for us to adopt an effective approach that could give the fullest range of relevant data so as to provide us with a legitimate and justified argument in the analysis later. Therefore, we planned to employed quantitative approach in this research. The questionnaire instrument will be used as the quantitative design. The design of this research is aimed to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the level of HRD intervention among UTM respondent?
- 2) What is the level of CSR in UTM?
- 3) What is the relationship between HRD intervention and CSR?

2.1 Population and Sample

The population of this study comprises of all UTM academic staffs from different faculties that are involve or have been involved in CSR programs. All UTM academic staffs are qualified participants. The questionnaires will be distributed to the respondents to examine the linkage between HRD Intervention and CSR. The samples of the study selected must be linked to the research objectives as it allows the researcher to collect good data and information.

2.2 Construct Measurement

Based on the research objectives, the survey instrument is developed which is adapted from previous studies by Garavan and Mcguire [9], Valentine and Godkin [46] and Glavas and Kelley [47]. This study will employ nominal, ordinal and interval scales. The questionnaire will be consisting of Likert scales of '1 to 5', which is rated from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

3. Discussion

This study seeks to identify the linkage between HRD intervention and CSR while hoping to contribute to both aspects academically. This study also shows that HRD involvement in CSR is an important issue that should be addressed. The results of the quantitative approach of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of HRD especially in training and development practices towards CSR. Most of the industry and university need to improve their CSR level to gain some benefits from the internal and external stakeholders. According to Atakan and Eker [48], due to the rapid progress of technology and businesses getting more intense, universities are driven to project a positive image to their internal and external stakeholders. Recently, CSR initiatives and efforts are not only the concern of business organizations but also have shifted to institutions of higher learning [49]. Bierema and D' abundo [32] argued that HRD is not only responsible for the growth and learning in an organization but also ensuring the organization is socially conscious in their management practices to promote social welfare in the organization. Hence, there should be a good relationship between HRD intervention and CSR. Implementing HRD practices such as training and development by the management of each university is the most vital to improve the level of CSR.

Therefore, HRD role in CSR is critical as it may lead to the enhancement of culture that supports sustainability, CSR, and morals [11] [50].

However, since the paper purely focuses on HRD intervention (training and development), it can be suggested to the future researchers to focus on other HRD intervention such as performance and reward management in order to find out the impact on CSR perception, performance or involvement.

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