

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS PART OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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Abstract: *The modern university, strongly anchored in the relevant aspects of the field in which it operates, is characterized by a relevant ability to identify those aspects that generate social impact. By carrying out projects that give major importance to the social side, universities manifest their role in educating students' perception of social responsibility. The synergy between formal and non-formal education at the university level is a desire of all interested parties. Attracting and integrating students in specific activities of volunteering and social responsibility projects is a manifestation of the social dimension of higher education. The case study presented in this work underlines the way in which students show a positive attitude towards extracurricular, non-formal activities. Participating in student scientific events and creating sustainable and socially responsible business plans is a desire of students. Starting from the identification of the current stage of the integration of social responsibility concepts in university management, this paper aims to present a series of proposals and recommendations that can constitute alternatives in the involvement of students and teaching staff in social responsibility projects.*

Key words: *social responsibility, higher education, education, management.*

JEL Classification: *M14, I23, I2.*

1. Introduction

Approaching the activity of a higher education institution from the perspective of its social dimension, represents a major objective integrated into the educational management strategy.

The concept of social responsibility at the level of university educational activity means the realization of an interdependence between the activities carried out in the university environment and the current activities, specific to the external environment in which the educational institutions carry out their activity. The existence and maintenance of a permanent relationship between universities and the external environment and the development of socially responsible activities must become the goal of the global activity [EU-USR, 2015].

By carrying out projects that give major importance to the social side, universities manifest their role in educating students' perception of social responsibility. The synergy between formal and non-formal education at the university level is a desire of all interested parties.

Universities must be aware of the importance of carrying out activities in the context of social responsibility. Their inclusion in the current activity of the educational institution must become a priority of the university management that will manifest itself in the long term.

2. Integration of social responsibility in the educational process

The integration of social responsibility in the educational environment must be based on the way this concept is defined. Starting from the general concept, the social responsibility of the educational process can be defined as representing the way in which educational institutions are involved in carrying out activities that bring a positive contribution to the development of the social and economic environment. The social responsibility of educational institutions must align with the global social responsibility wishes of the community in which they operate.

The social approach of a university's activity can be carried out starting from the existing concepts in the ISO 26000 international standard. The university management strategy must be fully integrated with social, ethical and moral values, with the defining

concepts of environmental protection and with the tools and techniques necessary for the social approach of the assumed activity [ISO 26000, 2021].

This standard presents valid and applicable aspects for all types of organizations, including educational institutions.

The information presented in the standard has the role of defining and explaining how the implementation of the practices used worldwide in the field of social responsibility should be carried out. ISO 26000 guidelines are based on best practices developed by private or public sector initiatives.

In order to better understand how a university can and must become socially responsible, some essential, integrated and synergistic concepts must be well defined (figure no 1).



Figure no. 1. Integrating the concepts of social responsibility and sustainable development

These concepts are (Mineia, 2013):

- a. Corporate social responsibility
This concept makes direct reference to the social and environmental aspects that are directly dependent on the current activity of the organization. Carrying out activities that include advantages for the environment and the community, represents the major objective of corporate social responsibility
- b. Sustainable development
Reducing the impact that an organization's activity can have on the environment is the basis for defining a social responsibility for the environment, which is closely related to the sustainable development of society. The conception, application and development of current activities with the role of protecting resources for future generations is a main objective in the activity of social responsibility.
- c. Social responsibility of universities

By concluding partnerships with the business environment, but also by carrying out their own activities, universities participate in the sustainable, socially responsible development of the community.

The development of educational programs that ensure the training of specialists able to get involved in the social development of the community must become a strategic objective in university management.

The social responsibility of universities must be seen as an integral part of the social responsibility of the community. Responsibility towards society and community can be a strong point of the educational institution. Manifesting the elements of responsibility towards society can be a competitive advantage for universities that have understood to include this concept in university management.

All the objectives that a university proposes to achieve, both in terms of education and scientific research, must be defined, achieved and implemented taking into account the involvement of the results obtained in the social environment.

Even if universities, through the faculties and specializations they offer, train specialists in various fields, they must all have a common denominator, namely their training under the aegis of social responsibility attributes.

3. Involvement of students in social responsibility activities. Case study Petrol-Gaze University of Ploiești

Social responsibility in universities should be seen as being affiliated with the concepts of global social responsibility of all organizations.

One of the main objectives of the manifestation of social responsibility in universities is represented by the integration of students' activity in this field. The involvement of students in social activities, volunteering, environmental protection represents as many opportunities through which they acquire knowledge and skills in the field of social responsibility.

By participating in various activities of this kind, students can have direct contact with community problems and learn to participate in solving them.

Attracting and integrating students in specific activities of volunteering and social responsibility projects is a manifestation of the social dimension of higher education.

The case study presented in this work underlines the way in which students show a positive attitude towards extracurricular, non-formal activities. Participating in student scientific events and creating sustainable and socially responsible business plans is a desire of students.

At the level of the Petrol-Gaze University in Ploiești, concerns about the integration of social education into the current educational curriculum have intensified.

Attracting students to activities with profound social manifestation is an opportunity for them to acquire new experiences and develop on a personal and educational level.

In order to implement concrete actions in the fields of non-formal education, Petrol-Gaze University acts in several directions.

The main directions of action are:

- the promotion among students of the opportunities offered by the external environment in order to acquire a non-formal education
- undertaking concrete actions with the aim of stimulating students' interest in activities with a deep social character
- the creation, maintenance and permanent development of a permanent dialogue between the academic environment and the social and economic environment, in order to achieve partnerships

- the promotion among students of successful models, worthy of being followed, which determine the effective participation of students in the life of the community
- the involvement of students in voluntary activities aimed at developing their skills and knowledge
- increasing the interest of students towards academic projects
- encouraging student participation in scientific events with the theme of social responsibility.

In order to increase the visibility of the university as well as of the students completing their studies within it, a series of scientific events with various themes but closely related to the fields of sustainable development and social responsibility were organized periodically. Among these can be mentioned:

- Interdisciplinary scientific workshop "Business administration in the oil and gas industry"
- Scientific Symposium "Macroeconomic policies for sustainable growth. effective solutions and social expectations"
- National Session of Student Scientific Communications "Energy sources in the development and management of sustainable businesses"
- "Business simulator - Managerial education through digital education in the academic environment"
- European University Days - Together for Europe" Education and Sustainable Development in the EU 27 Consistent participation in volunteering activities managed to create an empathetic and collegial spirit among students.

In the context in which the city of Ploiesti will become the Youth Capital of Romania in 2024, the students of the Petrol-Gaze University of Ploiesti are invited and encouraged to participate in various volunteering and social responsibility activities.



Figure no. 2. Ploiești – The youth capital of Romania 2024

Source: <https://capitalatineretului.ro/>

Student volunteers give their time, energy and skills to get involved in various activities in the community they belong to. Active participation in various events and projects is a practical way to put into practice the concepts of social responsibility learned in the courses.

A series of social responsibility activities were carried out through the representative organization of students in the Petrol-Gaze University of Ploiesti, namely through the Students' League.

4. Conclusions

Social responsibility, defined and explained in the ISO 26000 standard, represents the method of carrying out the current activities of the organization in full agreement with social, ethical and moral values, with the defining concepts of environmental protection and with the tools and techniques necessary for the social approach to the assumed activity.

In universities, this concept must be seen as being related to the activity of intellectual and educational development of students.

The integration of students' activity in social responsibility activities must represent a major, strategic objective in universities.

The involvement of students in social activities, volunteering, environmental protection represents as many opportunities through which they acquire knowledge and skills in the field of social responsibility.

Social responsibility at the level of university activity must be treated as an integral part of the social responsibility of the community in which the university operates.

When the concepts of social responsibility towards society are included in university management, this fact can constitute a competitive advantage.

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