

FOR AN ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BUSINESS

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Abstract

In Albanian society effects of business are greatly increased in all directions. In this paper we will highlight some important aspects related to the social side of the business and in particular its human face. It is understandable that businesses were primarily interested in maximization of profit to face competition, but experience shows that better harmonization of profit with other social impacts of his such as: charities, donations, funding for various social sides, setting favorable prices for groups of people in need, or at festive occasions etc. It would increase the effects of the overall business. Studies show that in the eyes of citizen opinion these businesses are assessed as serious, sustainable, and human with a positive status and that is very important for the performance of any business. In our paper is important identification of business situation mainly in Shkodra, but also beyond, in order to somehow affected to increase valuation by businesses in the direction of this question, aiming for more social impact and in a much broader perspective. Conclusions and recommendations are another aspect of this paper that will serves for broader perspective.

Keywords: *business, social impact, donation*

Introduction

Businesses small and medium enterprises, large companies and multinational corporations are first of all market players. The market represents the most important institution of modern economies and is generally thanks to the development of the market that have made possible to achieve higher welfare levels in a considerable part of countries.

The main principle that governs the logic of function of the market is for all types of actors operating within own welfare maximization. Thus, consumers or buyers are interested in maximizing the usefulness of the goods and services purchased; employees are interested to

reach the maximum salary possible. While the objective of the enterprise, known as classical economic analysis as profit organization, is to maximize personal profit (Borzaga & Fazzi, 2005: p. 30). But increasingly in the world today, except economic logic associated with the profit mentions of business social side, or what is otherwise known by the term "social responsibility of business, (companies, corporate)". This concept refers to the practice of integration in the vision of business and issues such as the protection and welfare of employees and customers, security in terms of offered, goods and services, the impact on the natural environment and the human community where they are operating. We are dealing with a change in terms of economic enterprise that promotes a culture of social responsibility of business, which integrates its profit logic also active involvement in solving social problems (Mariano, 2005, p.38).

The European Commission defines corporate social responsibility as the integration of the companies, social and environmental concerns in their economic activity for their interaction with stakeholders on a voluntary basis. Volunteering is underlined as an important element of social responsibility which exceeds the legal obligations of business to society and to the natural environment (European Commission, 2011, p. 3). Expressed in more detail, the concept of social responsibility of enterprises "basically means that they decide on their own initiative to contribute to improving society and to keep the environment cleaner. Voluntary integration of social and ecological concerns in economic activities of enterprises and their relationships with all interested sides, called stakeholders (European Commission, 2001,p. 5).

In albanian society, business effects are greatly increased in all directions. This article will highlight some important aspects related to the social responsibility of business and in particular its human face. It is understandable that businesses primarily interested in profit maximization, but experience shows that gaining self harmonization with other social impacts of business would increase overall business impact. The study is based on diverse data from official statistics, local newspaper articles, free conversations, mainly for business in the city of Shkodra, but also beyond. The objective of the study is to build a front view of the realities of integrating social responsibility by business Shkodra city, and to reflect on this reality.

1. Summary of theoretical discussion on the social responsibility of business

The concept of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) takes form in the 50 years of XX century. According to Carroll, the first book on the subject belongs to 1953 and is: "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman of H. Bowen". However over the years '50 - '60 concept is not clearly defined in a consensual manner and in general refers to decisions and actions taken for the purposes entrepreneurs that at least partially beyond the direct economic interests of the firm (Carroll 1979, p.497). Throughout these years the emphasis is on the contribution of entrepreneurship to growth of national economies through the production of a large quantity and variety of goods and services, employee care for personnel noted and improvement of social environment.

The first vision, however, because the criticism would reflect a social responsibility "superficial" centered on the image of the company and where responsibility towards society is seen as an externally imposed obligation on enterprises. Ackerman and Bauer criticize the term

"Social Responsibility" which according to them reflects this idea by filing as more appropriate term "social responsiveness" (Ackerman and Bauer, 1976: 6). Given these criticisms, in the 70s until early 80s, there is a change the conception of social responsibility. Internalization understands the importance of the undertaking of the principles of accountability, not only to improve its image by the application of these principles. In these years will prevail discussing the concept of Corporate Social Responsiveness of Ackerman and Bauer, that emphasizes a greater interest in social business.

During this period, taking ground operating instruments and internal processes to implement real social responsibility of the enterprise. Also was born social audit techniques, social balance and the code of conduct. The period is the concept of the "Committee for Economic Development" of entrepreneurial activity in the form of three concentric circles where the inner circle represents the basic function of the enterprise, and economic; intermediate circle represents the obligation of the enterprise to adapt changing social values and priorities; while the external circle represents the responsibility of the company to bring an improvement in the social environment (Committee for Economic Development, 1971, p.15).

This conception belongs and image of the activity of enterprises in the form of a pyramid divided into four levels of responsibility. At the base of the pyramid, according to Carroll, there are economic responsibilities (extraction of profits) upon which all other responsibilities: legal responsibilities relating to compliance with laws; ethical responsibilities on them (to do the right thing, to be fair, not causing damage) that include activities considered socially desirable or undesirable but not codified in law; stands at the top philanthropic activity (Carroll, 1991, p.39-48). In this conception with four levels should make good the difference between ethical responsibility and philanthropy. While the first is an integral part of the responsibilities of the enterprise in terms of social goals to be met, the second represents a free choice of the one who owns the company has nothing to do with the core of entrepreneurial activity. In fact cannot be called a socially responsible venture philanthropy confined to cases. Social responsibility includes but is not limited philanthropic activity in it.

Even the concept of social accountability will be criticized because it is seen that pays more attention to the mechanisms and techniques to implement it rather than understanding the importance of the process of transformation of social responsibility from a peripheral activity to a core activity of the enterprise. In the mid-80s, by the need to overcome the limitations mentioned, takes great weight in the direction of the third debate of studies called *Business Ethics* which deals with the determination of an explicit ethical framework through which, it can assess doing business and especially corporate activity. New conception processed and summarized especially in two important books of 1982: R. De George, *Business Ethics* and M. Velasquez, *Business Ethics: Concepts and Cases*. If socially responsible corporations can be defined by their every activity that they can be represented under a positive light as something that helps society, *ethics* meant standard that were independent of the goals of the enterprise, so this new direction was at least potentially more critical of business practices.

Proponents of this guidance did not conceive ethics to come after legal and economic issues but see as regulatory basis of doing business, as a source of legislation and justification of additional legal restrictions on the activities of enterprises (De George, 2005). At this point it must be said that the concept of "corporate social responsibility" have its opponents from the

beginning. Sharply criticism of "social responsibility" has come from Milton Friedman who, since the beginning of the discussion, considered it a "subversive doctrine" which would undermine the own foundations of a free society. "How could - he asked - that auto selected private individuals to decide what is social interest?"(Friedman 1962, p.133). In a subsequent article Friedman would insist that the only responsibility of the company is to engage in activities to increase its profits, leaving governments at social care (Friedman, 1970).

Other criticism would come from antagonistic positions of Friedman. Thus social responsibility would be seen as a cunning strategy of enterprises to cover the opposition of interests created by their own activity, on the one hand between entrepreneurs and employees, on the other with consumers (Ferrari, 2009 p.30-31). Despite these criticisms discussion on social responsibility would follow. Today is the dominant conception of "accountability to stakeholders", the so-called *stakeholders*, who are subjects that, although there have shares in companies, have legitimate interests to the activities of the enterprise, may be affected them. These include the local community, subordinates, suppliers, customers, etc.. In this discussion, role playing concept of "externalities", the existence of the external conditions that affect the dynamics of the enterprise. Even those who are outside the company may affect its performance, so that more companies cannot take into account outside their stakeholders.

This new conception was elaborated first in the book of Edward Freeman, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, 1984, in which the author emphasizes the close connection between ethics and competitive strategy. Freeman's theory is at the same time and ethical management, which considers the values and morality as central to the management of the organization. Freeman criticizes the very term "Corporate Social Responsibility" because he thinks that this term implies a separation of doing business and society ethics and refers to corporate, large enterprises, implying that small businesses do not have social responsibility. So he proposes a new substitute term "Company Stakeholder Responsibility", which means that all the companies, enterprises, have a responsibility to society; the main purpose of the enterprise is to bring value to the *stakeholders* and to fulfill their responsibilities; "responsibility" means not doing business separate from ethics (Freeman, 1984). Type of responsibility of company promoted by Freeman was applied by many successful managers who saw that, in the long term, the combination of services with all stakeholders, associated with the provision of high profits for shareholders.

2. Social responsibility of business in the world today and in Albania

Today the concept of social responsibility, widen is accepted by businesses operating in most countries of the world. Elements of social responsibility principles are serving as inspiring content editing documents such as mission, vision and values of the enterprise cards. It is important that companies that implement elements of social responsibility to make known to all interested parties how think of operating in the market. So it becomes necessary social communication through instruments such as card values and code of ethics, social and environmental balance, meeting the standards.

Card values, represents an instrument not to impose normative, self-regulatory and voluntary of enterprise. As the initial document was compiled by the European Institute for

Social Balance, and then adapted to an increasing number of large enterprises. "Charter values enterprise" is motivated by the need of making explicit and acceptance of certain pursuant ideals to which elected the behavior of the enterprise. At its based are values such as integrity, respect for the individual; human resource development; respect for the environment; care of internal and external associates; reliability of production systems and management; the attention to the increasing competitiveness of the enterprise profit; taking attention to research, development and innovation; fairness and transparency; Continuous interaction with society (Casotti, 2005 p. 13-18).

Code of Ethics is a document compiled voluntarily by enterprises, which outlines the rights and obligations of the company towards all its stakeholders in stating its policy towards them. It represents a tool that companies use in order integrating existing legal norms with the ethical norms of society in terms of economic, social and environmental. Based on the code of ethics serve international documents in the field of respect for human rights. Ethical Code elaborates more, the moral values underlying the mission of the enterprise, norms of behavior with all stakeholders, the company's ethical standards, internal sanctions for non-compliance of norms of behavior and instruments through which behavior is monitored personnel to apply these sanctions (Casotti, 2005: 19). With great importance here is the involvement of stakeholders, whether in design, whether in monitoring the implementation of the code with ethics norms.

Balance is the more social advised to respond to the information needs of stakeholders and transparency. It has to do with a qualitative and quantitative reporting system that provides a complete framework for interconnection of those social policy economic factors in the choices made by the enterprise (Casotti, 2005, p. 350). Social balance of an enterprise includes areas such as personnel hiring from work placements, wages and working conditions, respect for the principle of equal opportunities, trade union rights), consumers (safety and service quality of goods produced), the social environment (assessment of community relations with local institutions). To these fields are added and the assessment of the company's commitment to reduce the impact on the natural environment to improve his quality (Mariano, 2005, p. 76-78). Charter values and code of ethics, social and environmental balance can be regarded as internal instruments of the enterprise in its communication of social engagement, so they are not sufficient and should be supplemented with external authentication instruments of this type of engagement. Such certification functions are meeting standards SA 8000 and ISO 26000.

SA 8000 norm is first standard that is spread at international level regarding the social responsibility of the enterprise. The norm is worked out in 1977 in New York by Social Accountability International that was established by the Council on Economic Priorities, an organization that brings together in international level representatives of governments, universities, unions, certification bodies and consultancy offices. SA 8000 norm aims to standardize some managerial aspects related to social responsibility of the enterprise as respect for human rights and human dignity, respect for the rights of workers, the rejection of the juvenile harnessed, ensuring environmental safety work (Casotti, 2005 p. 37).

ISO 26000 is a new norm on the social responsibility of businesses approved in 2010 by the International Organization for Standardization. It is designed in the form of a guide which aims to guide all types of organizations in raising awareness about impact that their activity has on society and the environment, through the translation of the principles of ideas in effective

actions through reliance on *best practices*, already known in the public and private sector. ISO 26000 set out seven key themes to which organizations should be attentive to: the management of the organization; non-discrimination and respect for the rights of workers; labor practices of labor relations, social dialogue, labor conditions; environmental issues such as pollution prevention, use of renewable resources and protection of biodiversity; best practices as anti-corruption, fair competition, promote social responsibility elements card values; consumer protection; community involvement and development of the area (International Organization for Standardization. 2010).

EU political bodies has taken continuously and uninterrupted a number of initiatives in the field of social responsibility of business, as the above *Green Paper* and the development, continuous review of the implementation of strategies for social responsibility. These important documents need to be added the initiatives to support corporate networking involved in the CSR activities. Also more and more attention is being paid to promote greater involvement on the part of small and middle businesses, in their activity for the principles of social responsibility. The idea is that elements of social responsibility are corporate franchise of big multinational companies but could find space for the implementation and from small and medium enterprises.

Studies have shown that in the region of Western Balkans concept of CSR is a relatively new concept, which mainly promoted by multinational corporations and international development agencies (UNDP, 2008).

In Albania, interest from the private sector to implement "social responsibility" as a basis for their activity, but remains low, and businesses have embraced this vision represented mainly by large companies and daughters of multinational corporations. Therefore the concept of CSR in Albania is "largely philanthropic, unlike some other countries, where CSR has based function is closely related to business" (OSCE Presence in Albania and the Embassy of Canada, 2013, p.12-13). However, there is a steady increase in the level of social responsibility of businesses to conduct their activities in Albania. Thus, according to the first report on corporate social responsibility, published by the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Enterprise (MZHETS), prepared and finalized under the technical expertise of UNDP Albania has made progress on some important indicators compared with details of a study of UNDP during year 2008 According to this study improved corporate management practices and become more transparent to the public their financial reports

There is also progress regarding the development and conducting implementation of the undertakings of the ethical codes from firms. Also the number of companies that practice social activity and make public through social balance of the environment, as part of the annual report, has increased by about 10% compared with 2008. Another milestone in the field of social responsibility is the creation (2013) of the "English CSR network "network of companies that adhere to social responsibility practices. Formation of continuous professional training of staff is another aspect of corporate social responsibility in Albania that seriously evaluate. However there are important issues such as gender equality in the private sector where Albania is among the last countries in the Balkans. Similarly, in terms of external certification companies, only one company is certified according to SA 8000 (Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Enterprise, 2014, p. 23-27)

Increasing social responsibility of business comes after efforts, to create a friendly environment at the national level. Based on this objective Albanian government has promoted "corporate social responsibility" through adoption, in 2011, by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy (METE), of the National Action Plan (2011-2014). In this action plan, other priorities are to increase the awareness of enterprises, promotion of transparency making their social impact of environmental, strengthening of skills or competencies in the field of CSR, the definition of indicators to measure and reward excellence and progress in this field (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy, 2011).

Another initiative in this direction has been the organization in partnership with English CSR Network and UNDP. During 2014 year, the first edition for the "price of corporate social responsibility" was provided for giving three awards: innovation; best practice for SMEs, the best practice for large companies.

3. Social responsibility of business in the city of Shkodra

Capitalism in Albanian society and, as part of it, in the city of Shkodra have later development. Middle local businesses, especially small ones fighting for survival, in the context of a competition seemingly free but really unfair in many segments. Citizen opinion stated that businesses and businessmen often with their products and services, often cheat people, the prices do not justify their work and that "Turkish goods sold for western goods", that " they receive money and spoil work" that "the state leaves on their desire businesses as they like", etc..

It has become routine for the holidays of new year, prices of all commodities, especially fruits and vegetables and food products, rather than to decrease as happens in most countries of the world, they grow in unjustified rates. In daily newspapers proved quite well this situation. So for many reasons, among business buyers and citizens, seemingly in appearance has a temperate climate relationships, but in reality the situation is not what it should be. In free conversations with citizens will hear often that they said with indignation that "in the relationship with businesses should be cautious, because they can throw", that " not everything works as legitimate and fair" Of course, even in relationships with customers everyday things are improving better.

So there are more and more small and medium-sized businesses that have increased awareness about the work and their services to the citizens, even reflecting positively to different people in need. In free conversations held with citizens and small businessmen are reported cases of businesses that do offer discounts for goods and services to citizens in different situations for people in need, poor, homeless, families with many children, families with disabled children or handicapped. It is already known practice of some retail food businesses where they permitted payments for products purchased to be done later or in installments. Through various cafes and restaurants are frequent cases that served free coffee and fruit juices on festive occasions, especially religious ones, or premises that made available free environment on festive occasions, etc.. Of course also tradition affects in this regard. Shkodran culture know numerous cases, even early on when various businessmen, with their expenses have helped families in need to afford the wedding of children, especially in cases of girls from poor families, or to help people in need

to build the house. We think that local small and middle businesses , with their possibilities, have not properly understand and evaluate their social responsibility.

As noted above, the social responsibility of business, as a concept and practice, it is quite evident in Western societies. Already well organized practices and with comprehensive social benefits. Social responsibility of business is functioning as a system in which benefit of the citizens in the local community more generally, but also the business itself. Good union relations, increase of employee productivity, increasing confidence in the *brand*, good relationships with community contractors with local and central government are some of the benefits that come to business, socially responsible. When social business responsibility has positive impacts for all that, why then it does not work properly in our society? Below we will give some reasons, which we think have influenced and continue to influence in the relatively low impacts of social responsibility of business in Shkodra, but also throughout in the wider in all albanian society. Later development of the market economy, conditions the lack of experience in the functioning of the social responsibility of business in Albania. The data show that there are mainly large businesses and multinational companies that have been even engaged in interventions for social welfare and security, the preservation of the environment etc.

Albanian reality shows that are some of those daughters multinational companies which, in addition to social activities, have become quite heard for supporting many programs that enliven the cultural and artistic life of the entire society. But in Albania develop their activities other companies quite powerful, that if reluctant to be part of the initiative to contribute to various social aspects. Certainly the role of government in promoting social engagement of business is very important. There is also a national plan for the promotion of social responsibility, but not all businesses seem interested in becoming part of it.

Political clientelism of business significantly affects the growth of indifference and passivity of many businesses for social contributions. Like many other aspects of Albanian society and business is affected by the phenomenon of political polarization. Political changes affirm growth businesses that have financially support the election campaign of the party or winning coalition. Also many philanthropic activities, with greater coverage in various local media, show-oriented initiatives in a way that create political impacts and electoral benefits for donors businessmen who run in elections. Recorded numerous practices where large businesses and medium enterprises "with own initiative" build roads in villages, arrange and create green environments, help communities in neighborhoods in various municipalities for environmental clearance for water supply and sanitation, especially in time election campaigns and then these initiatives as extinct. But these practices negatively affect in the overall spirit and the functioning of donations and philanthropy.

Often the social responsibility of business is like humanity. Of course that humanity is a higher moral value, but social responsibility of business but is not limited here. Help sporadic cases of extreme poverty, serious illness, accidents, etc., and simplify concept of social responsibility and social effects diminish its many. These practices are a continuation of the tradition of the business to help people in critical cases, practices that are based on mental modeling of self-Albanians who "are generally more inclined to help without reservation, without interest and dedication to others ... when they are in big trouble or life is threatened by various social factors,

especially by natural disasters like earthquakes, fires explosions, flooding rivers, etc. “(Dervishi, 2005 p. 135)”.

So do not properly understand that the social responsibility functions in institutionalized manner, is a transaction system between business, community, media, government institutions, which interact together. Therefore, in the exercise of social responsibility of business is necessary to switch from traditional practices, in the contemporary institutional practices.

The values of social responsibility of business will be greater if we had a more developed sense of community. As noted above, the effectiveness of social responsibility increases if business-community collaboration is at high levels. It should be emphasized that the responsibility of the community in maintaining and enhancing the community environment is low. It is normal to drop business readiness for social contributions in community environments that are not stored or misused. But there are also quite effective experience in several quarters of Shkodra which have improved the road system or sewer, thanks to programs that promote collaboration, bringing together a modest contribution to community with given grants .

Conclusions:

From literature and issues, numerous documents regarding the social responsibility of business results that an organization with profitable economic activity is responsive when social values and morals take place in center of management organization, when not doing business separates ethics and society. Social responsibility refers to corporates, large enterprises and small to medium businesses, all these have a responsibility towards society and the environment

To summarize, an enterprise is responsible to society and the environment if it invests in recruitment, training and management of human resources in respect of the principles of "equality in training" and "equal opportunities"; restricts what it can influence its activity on the environment and invests in technology and manufacturing processes that respect it; guarantees integration and respect for social and environmental problems in the selection of trade partners; invests its resources not only to maintain the community in which it operates, but also to improve his livelihood.

What is the appearance of social responsibility in business activity in the Albanian and in city of Shkodra in particular? As in all countries of the Western Balkans and in Albania, and in Shkodra as its parts are subsidiaries of international companies that have internalized the principles of social responsibility in card values that consistently contribute to community stakeholders, develop activities that genuinely accountable to society and the environment represent this particular items in their complex balance sheets.

Large local businesses contribute sporadically and mostly disorganized in sponsorships of socio-cultural activities in the form of humanitarian aid for cases of serious health disaster of extraordinary events. These companies have shortcomings in terms of communication and making them transparent engagement through publication of balances. Often this type of engagement, have shown in media with aim to promote the political career of owner of companies.

Small and local businesses perform modest humanitarian and philanthropic activities, sporadically, mainly in religious festive occasions. As at great local businesses, they do not have social responsibility as model of doing business, but one of their peripheral activities. Overall, in terms of type, business social activity of the city is mainly directed at humanitarian severe cases of emergencies and small philanthropic with aid to people in need; terms of organization, it is sporadic, social responsibility is seen as a peripheral activity and not as a central ethical spirit in doing business.

The reasons for this state of business activity within the city of Shkodra in framework of social responsibility can be several:

- First, late development of the free market and the overall economic situation with still unconsolidated venture completely.
- Secondly, political clienteles that one side does not believe in communities' sincerity of businesses and in other side for this reason, many businesses are attracted by the environmental and social activity.
- Thirdly, the lack of a consolidated community spirit overshadows the spirit of continuous engagement in activities that are in favor of all.

Ahead of the Albanian business of Shkodra, we think that many problems arise in terms of organization and promotion of social responsibility. As in all other countries business contributions are a great value which can be used for the improvement of social life, especially vulnerable groups, to improve the parameters of the social environment, in the development of cultural and artistic life etc. The data indicate that we are at the beginning of this road. Including as many businesses in this regard, especially those small and medium enterprises, it is entirely possible for the fact that the life of Albanian society faces with various difficulties where everyone can find themselves with their contributions. Anyone who participates and provides input in this regard would be gained.

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