

THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN ACHIEVING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: AT THE SME LEVEL

Mohanad Ali Kareem¹, Cecília Mezei¹

¹*Kaposvár University, Hungary*

ABSTRACT

In this era of globalisation characterised by great high scientific and technological development, competition between institutions and companies is becoming more and more intensive in order to survive and achieve profitability, and achieve superiority over competitors. For this reason most companies have started striving for excellence by focusing on the most important resource, human resources, to achieve their economic, social and environmental goals, and then to also achieve social responsibility. This study aims to exam the role of human resources development strategy (training and development, organisational development and career development) in achieving corporate social responsibility at some of SMEs in Iraq,a special questionnaire has been prepared to collect data from a survey and a random sample which consists of (30) SMEs of the surveyed organisations was selected.The study found out HRD strategy effects significantly in achieving CSR (economic, environmental & social) dimensions, for this, it should be dealt in accordance to a strategic perspective, and develop it through many activities such as training and development, career development and organisational development so that it can play its role efficiently and effectively, and contribute to the achievement of specific goals.

KEY WORDS

human resource development, training and development, organisational development, career development and corporate social responsibility

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1 INTRODUCTION

Human resource managers are well positioned to play an instrumental role in helping their organisation achieve its goals of becoming an economically, socially and environmentally responsible firm – one which reduces its negative and enhances its positive impacts on society and the environment. Further, human resource (HR) professionals in organisations that perceive successful corporate social respon-

sibility (CSR) as a key driver of their financial performance can be influential in realising that objective. Human Resource Management (HRM) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are two concepts that are becoming increasingly important to company strategies. Indeed, companies are in search of new practices to increase their productivity and their competitive positions. Moreover, HRM

is an indispensable tool for any organisation, and CSR is becoming increasingly crucial for companies' competitiveness (Claire Dupont, 2013).

Economic and financial crises have proved that the absolute freedom of the market economy leads to economic, social and environmental disadvantages. Therefore, concepts such as sustainable development and social responsibility can rebalance the economic, social and environmental aspects and address the gap between financial returns for companies and their duties to various stakeholders (Wahiba, 2011). The HR function plays a vital role in formulating and achieving economic, environmental and social goals while also balancing these objectives with traditional financial performance metrics. The HR function can serve as a partner in determining what is needed or what is possible in formulating corporate values and sustainability strategy. At the same time, HR should play a key role in ensuring that employees implement strategy consistently across the organisation (Elaine Cohen, 2010). Human resource professionals have a key role to play to help a company achieve its CSR objectives. Employee involvement is a critical success factor for CSR performance. Human resource managers have the tools and the opportunity to leverage employee commitment to, and engagement in, the firm's CSR strategy (Strandberg, 2009).

The CSR of firms is increasingly important because the philosophy of this responsibility derives from its flexible and comprehensive character. This allows and encourages any organisation, whatever its size and scope of business, to adopt what it deems appropriate procedures and practices in accordance with its capabilities and material capabilities in response to market realities and requirements (Imad, 2014). However, the success of the firm in its role of responsibility depends mainly on its commitment to three criteria: environmental protection, community support and respect and responsibility to workers and members of society. Human capital development is one of the challenges that firms face in achieving its CSR because the attention to working individuals in terms of increasing their skills and raise their abilities as well as attention to social aspects in the field of work is a key to increase competitiveness and maximise profits of the firms through contributing to developing of the employee's performance, competencies and acquiring them new skills. Therefore, Human resource professionals have a key role to play to help a company achieve its CSR objectives.

Employee involvement is a critical success factor for CSR performance.

1.1 Problem of the study

The area of the study can be formulated with the following questions:

1. What is the role of human resources development strategy in achieving corporate social responsibility of SMEs in Iraq?
2. What is the level of human resources development strategy and corporate social responsibility of SMEs in Iraq?
3. What is the role of human resource development strategy in achieving the economic dimension of corporate social responsibility of SMEs in Iraq?
4. What is the role of human resource development strategy in achieving the environmental dimension of corporate social responsibility of SMEs in Iraq?
5. What is the role of human resource development strategy in achieving the social dimension of corporate social responsibility of SMEs in Iraq?

1.2 Objectives of the study

1. To identify the human resource development strategy within a new context related to the integration of HR and CSR of SMEs in Iraq.
2. To exam the role of human resources development strategy in achieving corporate social responsibility at some of SMEs in Iraq
3. To highlight the human resource development strategy and its role in firms through its advantages as it is one of the approaches adopted by firms to address rapid environmental changes and to meet the challenges posed by these changes.

1.3 Significance of the study

The significance of this research can be addressed by two main aspects: The strategy of human resource development and CSR. The importance of the study lies in the importance of human resources development strategy which is represented as the only way that enterprises can meet the changes in the business environment and achieve survival and profitability. It also highlights the importance of the topic in providing an image of the corporate social responsibility of the SMEs and it extends to the contribution

of the strategy of human resources development in achieving corporate social responsibility.

1.4 The study Design/methodology/approach

The study adopted an empirical approach and applied it to a random sample (100) of managers and their assistants and heads of departments of (30) SMEs in Iraq. Data was collected by questionnaire, field visits, personal interviews and some official documents to complete the study data. Also, SPSS was used for data analysis and interpretation.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Human resource development

Until recently it was rarely realised that a firm's human resources and human capital are sources of competitive advantage. Competitiveness cannot be achieved without managing performance and at the same time developing the skills and competence of employees. Performance management potentially makes the most significant contribution to individual and organisational learning and helps to raise organisational efficiency and promote growth (Adhikari, 2010). Firms cannot achieve their goals without human resources, as the main element and core resource for them. Therefore, it is necessary to have an efficient workforce capable of achieving its objectives through the development of human resources in the organisation through activities such as training and learning (Imad, 2014).

Over the past two decades, human resource development has become the fastest growing area of management development, due to the great interest of organisations in the face of intense competition and changes in the business environment. HRD can be defined as the process of developing and/or unleashing human expertise through organisation development and personnel training and development for the purposes of improving performance (Swanson R., 2001; Naima, 2008). It is one of the basic elements in moving, refining, maintaining and developing human abilities and competencies in its scientific, practical, technical and behavioural aspects. It is therefore an educational tool that provides people

1.5 Hypotheses of the study

The main hypotheses of the study can be formulated as follows:

H_1 : There is a positive significant relationship between human resources development strategy and the corporate social responsibility dimensions (economic, environmental and social) in the surveyed organisations.

H_2 : The human resources development strategy has significant effects on corporate social responsibility dimensions (economic, environmental and social) in the surveyed organisations.

with knowledge, information, theories, principles, values or philosophies that increase their work and production capacity. A set of systematic and planned activities designed by an organisation to provide its members, individuals and groups, with the necessary skills, knowledge, and capabilities to meet current and future job demands.

There is an emerging consensus among human resource development (HRD) academics that HRD can play an important role in promoting corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate sustainability (CS) and business ethics, and that these three areas are closely interrelated parts of the same system (Ardichvili, 2011). The HRD function can serve as a partner in determining what is needed or what is possible in formulating corporate values and sustainability strategy. At the same time HRD should play a key role in ensuring that employees implement the strategy consistently across the organisation. Sustainable human resource management (HRM) can be defined as using the tools of HR to create work that has the trust, values, skills and motivation to achieve a profitable triple bottom line (Cohen, Taylor & Muller-Camen, 2010).

For the purposes of this study Strategic HRD is defined as a systematic process of developing strategic human resources (including talent development, training/development, organisation development, performance development, and career development) in order to enable an organisation to achieve its strategic objectives.

2.2 Human Resource Development Components

Although everyone does not agree about the definitive boundaries of HRD within HR, most HRD scholars agree on the following as the three central components of HRD: organisation development, career development and training and development (Chalofsky, 1989; Jacobs, 2003, Burke & Hutchins, 2008, Thomas, Ragaven et al, 2016).

2.2.1 Organisation Development

Swanson and Holton (2001) suggest that there are many different views of OD, since the contexts of the needs for system change vary greatly across different organisations. They state that OD is essentially a method for defining and solving problems related to the organisation, and they introduce two popular models that are seen in many OD process models: action research and organisation development for performance system (ODPS). (Cummings & Worley, 2005). On the other hand, ODPS involves implementing a process of planned, systematic change to develop human expertise for improving individual, group, process and organisation performance: (a) analyse and contract, (b) diagnose and generate feedback, (c) plan, design, and develop, (d) implement, and (e) evaluate and institutionalise (Lynham, 2000). We can define organisation development as a systematic process of implementing organisation-wide change and development interventions in order to enable an organisation to achieve its strategic objectives.

2.2.2 Training and Development

Training and development is one of the important HRD functions in a constantly changing global economic environment, in which every individual in an organisation has an opportunity to develop competencies accordingly. Training is described as the extension of formalised programmes to develop knowledge, skills and abilities, and development is preparing for future responsibilities while increasing the capacity to perform at a current job (Evans & Davis, 2005). Jacobs & Washington (2003) indicate that training and development refers to an integrated set of planned programs, provided over a period of time, to help assure that all individuals have the competence necessary to perform their fullest potential in support of the organisation's goals. Also, the researches can define the training and development is a systematic process of providing

training and development of employees in order to enable organisation to achieve its strategic objectives.

2.2.3 Career Development

Chalofsky (1989) states that career development services have emerged as part of HRD functions, beginning in the early seventies. In this era, firms sent recruiting counsellors to schools in order to provide careers guidance and counselling to students. At the same time, they provided their employees with advice on how to pursue their career goals within the organisation. Career development involves the person's creation of a career pattern, decision-making style, integration of life roles, value expression and life-role self-concepts (niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). Career development interventions assist in building a partnership between the organisation and its employees, enriching their knowledge, skills and abilities by improving individual competencies, allowing simultaneous enhancement the organisational effectiveness (Gilley et al., 2002). We define career development as an ongoing process by which individuals progress through a series of changes until they achieve their personal level of maximum achievement

2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility

The new trends adopted by sustainable development in the achievement of social justice and the promotion of human well-being as well as the preservation of human rights have led to growing social responsibility of economic institutions through a voluntary and moral commitment towards the society in which it operates. The emergence of the term sustainable development has led to the emergence of new ideas and terminology on the concept of corporate social responsibility, which have changed over time as a result (Imad, 2014). The definitions of CSR have varied, there are many initiatives and events which depend on the nature of the work, the scope of organisational work and the financial and human capacities of the institution.

D'Anato, Henderson & Florence (2009) see social responsibility as the institution's commitment to the society in which it operates. Al-Ghalibi & Al-Ameri (2005) see the social responsibility as a representation of the expectations of society for the initiatives of business organisations in the area of responsibility borne by business organisations towards society

beyond the minimum level of compliance with the law in such a way that they do not impair a business organisation in performing its basic functions in order to obtain an adequate return on its investments.

2.4 Corporate Social Reasonability Dimensions

CSR has dimensions that can be determined or measured though some scholars and researchers consider that the dimensions of social responsibility are almost the same as the dimensions of sustainable development, which are economic, social and environmental.

2.4.1 Economic Dimension

The economic dimension concerning the processes for improving and changing production patterns (use of clean energies, introduction of improved technology, selection, financing and improvement of industrial techniques in the field of resource utilisation). In addition to the activities related to consumption (the sustainable management of natural resources), as well as the strategies and directions of economic development and taking into account environmental trends in the long term (Ibtissem, 2006).

2.4.2 Environmental Dimension

The environmental dimension revolves around the conservation of economic, environmental and climatic resources, the protection of the environment and rational exploitation of the possibilities available within specific priorities that ensure the needs of the present without affecting the abilities of subsequent generations to meet their needs (Saleh, 2008).

2.4.3 Social Dimension

It is a natural human being right to live in a clean and healthy environment and a right to practice all activities while guaranteeing their right to a fair share of natural resources, environmental and social services, invest them to serve their basic needs (shelter, food, clothing and air) as well as the complementary needs of improving their standard of living (work, recreation and fuel) and without diminishing opportunities for future generations (Nour El Din & Borghedh, 2016).

2.4.4 The role of human resource development strategy in achieving corporate social responsibility

The organisations strive to achieve their social responsibility to improve their reputation in the society and strengthening of their brand among customers, employees positively. (Imad, 2014) indicates that in order to achieve corporate social responsibility and its economic, environmental and social dimensions through HRD strategy which support and develop a framework that enables organisations to achieve this goal, where HRD strategies such as training and development, organisational development and career development are working to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of employees and raise their experience and improve their competence in terms of achieving corporate social responsibility. CiPd (2013) indicates the great majority (81%) of HR managers see their contribution to the corporate responsibility agenda as vital and a similar proportion (78%) believe that they make a valuable contribution to driving and promoting it in practice.

Human resource development plays a key role in the success of institutions, whether economically, socially or environmentally. In the economic perspective where human resources development strategy contributes to increasing productivity, achieving sustainable competitive advantage and higher financial performance. HRM can be critical to employees' engagement, motivation and creativity in finding new ways to reduce inputs, design eco-friendly products and increase quality (Elaine Cohen, 2010). Environmentally, the human resource development strategy has an effective role in achieving the environmental dimension of social responsibility through environmental training and development, environmental management and policies of human resources rehabilitation. Socially, human resource development strategy works on design training programmes in terms of occupational health and safety procedures, raising awareness of the nature of risks and promoting of continuous learning culture within the institution. It can help a company address wider social problems that affect its external rights, safety practices, labour standards, performance development, diversity, employee compensation and more.

3 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

To achieve the study objectives and test the hypotheses, the study adopted an empirical approach and applied it to a random sample (100) of managers and their assistants and heads of departments of 30 SMEs in Iraq. Data was collected by questionnaire, field visits, personal interviews and some official documents to complete the study data. This study was based on a questionnaire as a major data collection tool, which included three major parts. The first part is related to the personal characteristics of the study sample, the second part is related to the independent variable which is HRDS and the third part is focused on the dependent variable CSR. The questionnaires were distributed to the sample and 90 questionnaires were returned, equivalent to 90%. In order to analyse the data profile, we used descriptive statistics. The data in Table 1 shows that service and manufacturing industry prevails in the sample over retail (92%), and those local companies are also more representative (80%). The analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS IBM Version 23). The summary of results was presented using frequency distribution and percentages, which was used to determine the proportion of respondents choosing the

various responses. Descriptive statistics (standard deviation, mean and relative importance) were used to identify the level of HRDS variables (Training & Development strategy and Learning strategy) and CSR variables (economic, environmental and social) in the surveyed SMEs. Pearson Correlation was used to identify the causal relationship with dependent and independent variables and ANOVA analysis was used to identify the effect of the independent variable which is HRDS on the dependent variable CSR.

Tab. 1: The personal characteristics of the study sample

Nature of industry	No. of enterprises	Sex		Total
		M	F	
Textiles	2	5	8	13
Furniture	3	10	1	11
Food	4	7	3	10
Telecom	2	8	4	12
Chemical	4	8	2	10
Petrochemical	3	10	–	10
Agricultural	4	9	2	11
Hotel & tourists	4	8	3	11
Banking	4	7	5	12
Total	30	72	28	100

4 RESULTS OF ANALYSING STUDY VARIABLES

4.1 Human Resource Development

Table 2 shows the results of a descriptive test of human resource development, where the mean of human resource development is 3.265, which is more than the standard mean 3 and the standard deviation is (0.586), which mean that the individual's answers are located in the third box on the Likert scale. This leads to the conclusion that there is a good level of HRD in surveyed SMEs, the training & development strategy constitutes the highest relative importance 55% with a mean of 3.319 and then learning strategy 45% with a mean of 3.211.

Tab. 2: The results of the descriptive test of human resource development

HRD Variables	Mean	SD	Relative importance
Training & Development Strategy	3.319	0.611	55%
Learning Strategy	3.211	0.562	45%
Total	3.265	0.586	100%

Tab. 3: The results of descriptive test of CSR

CSR Variables	Mean	SD	Relative importance
Economic dimension	3.733	0.652	38%
Environmental dimension	3.245	0.864	30%
Social dimension	3.451	0.631	32%
Total	3.476	0.715	100%

4.2 Corporate Social Responsibility

Table 3 presents the responses of the sample of the study to the questions concerning with the level of CSR in surveyed enterprises, the respondents' responses reflected a good level of CSR with a mean of (3.476) and standard deviation of (0.715) which located it at a good degree of approval, which means that the individual's answers are located in the third box on the Likert scale. This leads to the conclusion that there is a good level of CSR in the surveyed SMEs, the economic dimension constitutes the highest relative importance (38%) with a mean of (3.733) and then social dimension and environmental dimension (32% and 30%) with means of (3.451 and 3.245) respectively.

4.3 Testing and Analysis of the Hypotheses

H_1 : There is a positive significant relationship between the human resources development strategy and corporate social responsibility dimensions (economic, environmental and social) in the surveyed organisations.

Table 4 indicates there is a positive significant relationship at a significance level of 0.01 among all of the variables where the correlation between human resources development strategy and corporate social responsibility is (0.624), which is strong and significant relationship at a significance level of 0.01, that means the hypothesis is accepted. Moreover, the results show the stronger significant relationship is between training & development strategy and the economic dimension which is (0.759).

Tab. 4: Correlation matrix

	Economic dimension	Environmental dimension	Social dimension
Training & Development strategy	0.759**	0.542**	0.651**
Learning strategy	0.630**	0.648**	0.517**
HRD & CSR		0.624**	

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

H_2 : The human resources development strategy significantly the corporate social responsibility dimensions (economic, environmental and social) in the surveyed organisations.

Table 5 (ANOVA analysis), which indicates the significance effect of the human resources development strategy in corporate social responsibility, where the F-value is (102.321) which is a highly significant value at a significance level of (0.05). The explanatory power of this model is high according to the value of (R^2) which is (0.674) This indicates that human resources development strategy explains (61.7%) of the respondent variable, which is corporate social reasonability. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

Tab. 5: ANOVA analysis for the effect of HRD in CSR

Sig.	F	Mean Square	df	Sum of Squares	Adjusted R^2	R^2
.000	102.321	37.42	1	41.321	0.631	0.674
		0.091	305	29.138		

Table 6 shows the analytical effect indicators of HRD variables in CSR, where training & development strategy has a significance effect on CSR, where F-value is 374.876, which is a high significant value at significance level 0.05, α value is 0.546 and β value is 0.727. Thus, the equation of regression model is as follows:

$$CSR = 0.727 + 0.546 \text{ Training \& develop. strategy,}$$

where R^2 is 0.553, this indicates that training & development strategy can explain 55% of CSR. Learning strategy also has a significance effect on CSR at a significance level of 0.05, where the equation of regression model is as follows:

$$CSR = 0.667 + 0.607 \text{ Learning strategy,}$$

where R^2 is 0.467, that means learning strategy can explain 47% of CSR.

Tab. 6: ANOVA analysis for the effect of variables of HRD in CSR

	f	df	p	R^2	α	β	Sig.
Training & Develop. strategy	374.876	1.214	0.000	0.553	0.546	0.727	0.05
Learning strategy	247.839	1.214	0.000	0.467	0.607	0.667	0.05

5 FINDINGS

1. The results show that the human resources development strategy significantly effects CSR dimensions (economic, environmental and social) in the surveyed organisations.
2. The results show that there is a positive significant relationship between human resources development strategy and CSR dimensions (economic, environmental and social) in the surveyed organisations
3. The surveyed SMEs do not pay significant attention to human resources development strategy, where there is a lack of learning processes, weak exchange of ideas and communication among individuals, and a lack of designing appropriate training programmes to develop their skills, knowledge and competences.
4. The CSR priorities of the surveyed SMEs mainly focus on the economic dimension as a strategic objective, and then social and environmental dimensions.
5. The surveyed SMEs do not pay significant attention to integration and alignment between HRD strategy and CSR dimensions to achieve their strategic objectives.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Our study sought to investigate the role of human resources development strategy (training and development, organisational development and career development) in achieving corporate social responsibility at some of SMEs in Iraq. The relevance of this study relies on the association of strategic human resource development with the advancement of corporate social responsibility.

Although there are studies that investigate the relationship between these constructs, they do not specify how SHRD influences the different dimensions of CSR (AOULA, 2013, Ardichvili, 2011, Imad, 2014). In this manner, our research verified that human resources development strategy significantly effects CSR dimensions (economic, environmental and social) in the surveyed organisations. SHRD acts more proactively in the economic dimension as strategic objective and is less present in social and environmental dimensions.

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AUTHOR'S ADDRESS

Mohanad Ali Kareem, Kaposvár University, Faculty of Economic Science, Doctoral School of Management and Organizational Sciences, Kaposvár, Guba Sándor u. 40, 7400, Hungary, e-mail: mohannadali25@gmail.com

Cecília Mezei, Kaposvár University, Faculty of Economic Sciences, Kaposvár, Hungary, e-mail: mezeic@rkk.hu