

Examining the Corporate Social Responsibility of the Catholic University Institute of Buea (CUIB) – The Entrepreneurial University

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Abstract

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to business practices involving initiatives that benefit society. A business's CSR can encompass a wide variety of tactics, from giving away a portion of a company's proceeds to charity, to implementing "greener" business operations. Every corporation has a corporate social responsibility policy and it produces annual detail report of its activities. In this concept companies decide voluntarily or are obliged by law to contribute to a better society and a cleaner environment, it's integrate social and environmental concerns in business operations and their interaction with their stakeholders. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is also called corporate conscience; corporate citizenship or responsible business, it is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model and this can help build customer loyalty based on distinctive ethical values. The Catholic University Institute of Buea (CUIB) use their commitment to corporate social responsibility as their primary positioning tool in an environment or area that little is known about social corporate responsibility.

Keywords: Corporation; Social responsibility; Policy

Introduction

Corporate social responsibility is a concept which has become dominant in business reporting, every corporation has a policy concerning corporate social responsibility and produces an annual detail report of its activities. While many companies now practice some form of social responsibility, some are making it a core of their operations.

In this concept of corporate social responsibility, companies or organisations decide voluntarily or are obliged by law to contribute to a better society and a cleaner environment this by trying to integrate the social and the environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders.

Background of the study/Company review

The Catholic University Institute of Buea (CUIB) South West Region, Cameroon, was approved as a non-profit making university in two separate letters.

The authorization to create CUIB on 09/01/0194 of 11 June 2009 and the authorization to start was signed by the Honourable Minister of Higher Education Prof Jacque Fame Ndongso by decision no 10/02173/N/MINSUP/DDES/ESUP/SAC/NJE/ebm dated 26th of May 2010.

Its primary purpose is to train professional servant leaders with moral and spiritual values so that they may be responsible to their communities. The proprietor/chancellor of the Catholic University of Buea is the Bishop of the Diocese of Buea.

In June 2011, another arm of the University, the Business and Research Park was created as a legal entity of its own by the Cameroon laws no RC BUC.2031-B023 with the name CUIB-Centre for entrepreneurship research and innovation.

From the president's message of 2015/2016 academic year, he reiterated that anyone who steps into the CUIB campus will notice that CUIB has a strong sense of community and campus pride. It clearly makes a difference in the lives of students and the surrounding communities in Buea. The students, staff and faculty go out weekly to carryout volunteerism in surrounding communities. Just five years old, the rest of the country has begun noticing its accomplishments through

its students who are not only likeable and humble but are strong academically as they can compete with their peers internationally and win internal awards. Examples include, the Tony Elumelu entrepreneurship awards, the Anzisha award etc.

The Catholic University Institute of Buea Sport Academic (CUSA), Went operational in December 2014 with authorisation no 1106/G37/C84/VOL II/SAAJP with the main aim of assisting young, talented and excellent skilled Cameroonians in the various field of sport like football, volleyball, basketball, handball etc.

Literature Review

Different organisations have framed different definitions of social corporate responsibility - although there is considerable common ground between them. Corporate social responsibility is about how companies manage the business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society.

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development thinks that corporate social responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is also called corporate conscience; corporate citizenship or responsible business is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model. According to modern researchers there is hardly any definition of corporate social

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Received June 27, 2016; **Accepted** September 14, 2016; **Published** September 21, 2016

Citation: Abam EN (2016) Examining the Corporate Social Responsibility of the Catholic University Institute of Buea (CUIB) – The Entrepreneurial University. J Tourism Hospit 5: 242. doi: [10.4172/2167-0269.1000242](https://doi.org/10.4172/2167-0269.1000242)

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responsibility that includes all of these characteristics. However, they are the essential features of the corporate social responsibility concept that are being reproduced in all the corporate social responsibility definitions. Although a lot of corporate social responsibility activities are described by the law, many definitions of corporate social responsibility state these activities to be voluntary.

There are six core characteristics or concepts of corporate social responsibility that researchers have confirmed the validity in many industries. This author will attempt to review these six components of corporate social responsibility in the context of the Catholic University Institute of Buea.

Practices and values

It is obvious that corporate social responsibility implies a particular set of business practices and strategies that deal with social issues. Moreover, many writers think that corporate social responsibility is a philosophy or set of values that underpins these practices. Therefore, it is often being discussed not only what companies do in the social arena, but why they do it.

Beyond philanthropy

Sometimes corporate social responsibility is mainly about philanthropy, which means, for example, corporate generosity towards the less fortunate. Currently it is being stated that corporate social responsibility should also be about how the entire operations of the company impact our society. Among core business functions one can name production, marketing, procurement, human resource management, finance, and so on. This core characteristic implies that corporate social responsibility needs to be mainstreamed into normal business practice rather than being left only to discretionary activity. Some companies use corporate social responsibility methodologies as a strategic tactic to gain public support for their presence in global markets, helping them sustain a competitive advantage by using their social contributions as another form of advertising.

Ethical responsibility

It is to do what's right even when not required by the letter or spirit of the law. This is the theory's keystone obligation, and it depends on a coherent corporate culture that views the business itself as a citizen in society, with the kind of obligations that citizenship normally entails. Corporate social responsibility can help build customer loyalty based on distinctive ethical values. Some companies use their commitment to corporate social responsibility as their primary positioning tool, e.g., the co-operative group, the body shop and American apparel.

Economic responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is a general name for any theory of the corporation that emphasizes both the responsibility to make money and the responsibility to interact ethically with the surrounding community.

Multiple stakeholders orientation

Corporate social responsibility is also a specific conception of that responsibility to profit while playing a role in broader questions of community welfare - to adhere to rules and regulations [1].

Research Methodology

Veal [2] indicated that an empirical approach is the collection and analysis of data; it could be quantitative or qualitative, primary or

secondary. No research is purely empirical; it is usually informed by some sort of theory or conceptual frame work. Some researchers are of the opinion that a single research method may use both quantitative and qualitative techniques and procedures in combination as well as use primary and secondary data. The quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedure each have their own strength and weaknesses.

For this research work, the researchers used only secondary data that was information collected from the Catholic University Institute of Buea bulletins and other University documents and websites.

Assessment of the Catholic University Institute of Buea Core Values as Applicable in their Corporate Social Responsibility Programme

In line with its mission of training professional servant leaders, the Catholic University Institute of Buea has been carrying out some social corporate responsibility methods in their surrounding communities.

Economic of communion (Eoc)

Chiara Lubich, Foundress of the Focolare's Economy of Communion Philosophy was overwhelmed by the poverty of her members and the inequalities between the rich and the poor and she realized that something more radical needed to be done. It is in this light that in 2007, Bishop Immanuel Bushu, Bishop of the Diocese of Buea - Cameroon had an inspiration to found a Catholic Professional University to address the problems of unemployment, poverty, youth idleness and dependency and overcrowding in public universities. The Bishop surprised the world by declaring it an EoC university. The Bishop and proprietor's vision was not only to train job creators versus Job seekers but to form a "new people," "new men and women", - Christian business leaders, saints and scholars, entrepreneurs, workers, directors, consumers, scholars, administrators, students, economic workers, rich and poor, families - who could be called "homo donator," persons who would be capable of putting into practice the "culture of giving" in a new society that puts solidarity and sharing at the heart of its understanding of relationships and so bring the authentic transformation that the African continent needs through living out the "culture of giving". To achieve this vision of the proprietor, the Catholic University Institute of Buea has design and built what is now known as the CUIB - Economy of Communion village. This is a series of "boukarous," circular buildings, seven in number to express perfection and to remind anyone who enters the campus to know that sharing is our culture. These structures are meant also to facilitate collaborative work, learning in groups, and sharing [3].

Economy of communion and the CUIB business and research park

The Catholic University Institute of Buea has created its own business park known as centre for entrepreneurship, research and innovation (CUIB - CERI) [4,5]. The idea of the business park is to demonstrate that economic activity can be viable when performed in a climate of freedom, equality, and fraternity. It is important to note here that all businesses that are in partnership with CUIB - CERI must be willing to share a percentage of their profits in three parts - to the poor, to sustain the business, and to foster the culture of sharing [3].

Volunteerism

The Catholic University of Buea strives to promote volunteerism in a society where the culture of volunteerism is not well valued.

There is also the CUIB- volunteerism network program which is also to help encourage student's community engagement service [6-8]. A lot of the community work is done during the volunteerism week and the monthly volunteerism work carried out by the students, staff and faculty (employees) of various schools and also the college of business and technology. CUIB is deeply committed to corporate responsibility initiatives through pro bono service, community engagement, diversity and environmental sustainability [9].

He for she programme

The Catholic University Institute of Buea has introduced the he for she program, a solidarity movement for gender equality developed by United Nation Women to engage men and boys as advocates and agents of change for the achievement of gender equality and women's right [10].

Family fund campaign (FFC)

This was introduced as a flagship tradition in the 2013/2014 academic year with main purpose to engage internal stakeholders of the University to raise funds to support some pressing needs of the University [11].

Senior class philanthropic gift

It was also introduced as a way to encourage students to give to the University as the University has also impacted the students during their stay on campus.

Social and environmental awareness and responsibility

Here it enables students to be accountable to their communities, promote the common good, respect creation and the environment [12].

Sr. Emmanuela Fomenky Memorial Foundation clinic

This is a health unit that was name after the founder Rev. Sr. Emmanuela Fomenky. It has a complete medical team (resident medical doctor, nurse, laboratory technician, manager etc). This centre renders health facilities to the students, staff, faculty and the community [13].

Afrobasket women 2015

The Catholic University Institute of Buea extended a hand of friendship to the Cameroon female national basketball team throughout the competition; this is in line with its community engagement. According to one of its player Sandrine Nzeukou, this support from CUIB was inspiring as it facilitated their movement with convenience throughout the tournament. She concluded that giving back to the community is a good initiative.

Scholarship scheme

The Catholic University Institute of Buea in its quest to train a new generation of young, dynamic, talented and problem solving entrepreneurs with moral and spiritual values that will transform and bring sustainable development to their communities, the president Rev. Fr. George Nkeze revealed that the scholarships scheme is part of CUIB's community responsibility. In 2014, 12 scholarships were provided to the underprivileged children of villages around Buea subdivision – the area where the university is found and this scholarship shall consider gender issues and are for any of the CUIB's higher national diploma program. This scholarship shall cover their tuition for the two years of the program. The types or forms of scholarship include:

The chancellor's excellence scholarship: It is a ten tuition-based

scholarship opportunities of academic excellence and it is renewable on an annual basis. It was started in the 2015/2016 academic year by the Chancellor and Bishop of Buea Diocese – Immanuel Bushu.

CUIB community stakeholders scholarship (C2S2): It was launched in 2014/2015 and twelve scholarships were offered to children of twelve eligible communities found around the university environment.

CUIBY talent scholarship: As an entrepreneurial University talent development CUIB award scholarship is offered to students who demonstrate exceptional skills/talents in sports and sociocultural activities for the sustainable development of their communities. It was initiated in 2014 and the number of students selected varies from year to year.

Limitation

This researcher encountered the following limitation while carrying out this research:

- The finances needed to carry out this research work were insufficient to enable the researcher to move to other towns to gather the available literature.
- The researcher could not find enough literature as textbooks concerning this area of study was not available in the subdivision.
- Poor roads also hinder the researcher from moving to places to collect the needed literature.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The Catholic University Institute of Buea (CUIB) – the entrepreneurial University like any other company or business organisation is obliged to contribute to a better society and a cleaner environment. The university Institute through its volunteerism program that it has put in place has been felt by the Buea community, it has thus awakened the spirit of volunteerism in a society that little was known about this and this has been done as it tries to implement its policy of corporate social responsibility. It has thus integrated social and environmental concerns in business operations and their interaction with their stakeholders.

The Catholic University Institute of Buea like any business organisation is not only focusing in trying to make money, they also try to adhere to the rules and regulations set up by the state of Cameroon but also tries to be an ethically responsible organisation.

Recommendations

- The Catholic University Institute of Buea should use their commitment to corporate social responsibility as their primary positioning tool in this community.
- Based on the number of scholarships the university institute has awarded to the underprivileged students in their community, the researcher therefore suggests that the university should increase the number of underprivileged student to benefits from the various scholarships schemes and it should however think of the other six core concepts of corporate social responsibility that has been confirmed by researchers.

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