

Managerial Social Responsibility - a sociological perspective

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility is a well-recognised notion not only among businesspeople but also among their beneficiaries. Since Poland's accession to the European Union, the implementation of CSR strategies has become even more common and has come to occupy a well-established position among business owners. Nevertheless, this element of management is often recognised as a phenomenon lacking in the human factor. CSR is frequently discussed in such contexts as its implementation, the way it affects clients, its benefits as a business strategy, and the way it is perceived by staff members. However, in the whole discourse on running a socially responsible business one crucial factor is missing, namely that of the people who are responsible for the realisation of CSR strategies in a company. It is important to notice that along with the implementation of the strategies, the role or function of managers in the business ecosystem undergoes a change. The change is not necessarily dictated by the held position or the business strategy, but rather by the real engagement of managers in the realisation of socially responsible corporate policy or their own beliefs and empathy. It happens that the managers, often without imposing the guidelines and CSR strategies from the top down, create a socially responsible business and are able to manage their teams in a way that is close to the values they hold, hence this phenomenon is definitely noteworthy.

In the current business reality, it is important to stress that apart from the realisation of CSR, the social responsibility of managers also plays a crucial role as it not only completes but also enables the realisation of this strategy in a company. In this article, the concept of MSR is supposed to extend the notion of CSR as it includes *a socially responsible manager* who implements CSR strategies at various levels of a business. The concept also includes real social engagement of managers that stems from their own beliefs and actions, and is frequently performed outside of their workplace.

1. Corporate Social Responsibility

It is important to indicate that the term 'social responsibility' was mentioned for the first time already in 1958. It appeared in a book "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman" written by an American economist Howard R. Bowen. The author understands social responsibility as "managers' duty to conduct such a policy, make such decisions and delineate such business directions

¹ Anna Parniewicz-Bętkowska is a master's degree student at The Faculty of Sociology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, e-mail address: annabetkowska7@gmail.com

as to be faithful to the goals and values of the society” [Bowen, 1953]. This means that even in the initial stage of coining the definition, the role of a manager was viewed as a valid element of certain actions. More recently, G. Bartkowiak observes that “business social responsibility, or broadly speaking corporate social responsibility, is not only about making profits for the shareholders (the owners), but the term also applies to the impact of certain business decisions and omnifarious actions on all the subjects connected with it, inside as well as outside of an organisation” [Bartkowiak, 2011, p. 15-16, self translation]. Furthermore, according to B. Rok, responsible business can be defined as “a strategic and long-term approach based on the principles of social dialogue and the search for solutions beneficial to all [Rok, 2004, p. 18-19, self translation]. He also points out that in an everyday business practice Corporate Social Responsibility manifests in two dimensions: external and internal.

In the process of formulating the concept of *Managerial Social Responsibility*, the definition proposed by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) appears to be the most consistent with the thesis of this article, namely, that Corporate Social Responsibility “is the continuing commitment of a business to behave ethically and contribute to the economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as the local community and society at large” [WBCSD, 2020]. The International Finance Corporation from the World Bank Group completes it by adding that “Corporate Social Responsibility is the commitment to contribute to a sustainable economic growth by working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve the quality of life, in a way which is good for the business as well as for the general growth” [Krukowska, 2017]. Although rather indirectly, this way of defining the concept takes cognisance of a manager as a person responsible for business management, but it does not precisely point out to it. Instead, it stresses the significance of an organisation as a whole, remotely taking into account managers’ influence on its functioning.

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility contains many premises. However, its underlying assumption is the voluntary principle which indicates lack of constraint to deploy its guidelines both by the managerial staff and the rest of an organisation. There are no legal constraints forcing a business to apply CSR. In practice, this could mean that it is the managers’ deep ethical awareness that inspires them to act.

2. Corporate Social Responsibility and managers’ role in an organisation

The increasing importance of Corporate Social Responsibility in modern organisations can be observed not only in external business activities undertaken but also in changes occurring within corporate structures. The realisation of Corporate Social Responsibility or even its mere acceptance is formulated on the highest level of an organisation, and later it is assigned to its lower levels. It seems that these days it is hard to determine whether the companies’ acceptance of the CSR strategy is an element of a wider image campaign aiming at creating a positive business image, or an undertaking to follow a prevailing trend in business. Thus, an assumption can be made that CSR stopped being associated

only with social events or charity work but has become part of a business philosophy at the management level. That also applies to Poland.

CSR Managers research conducted in 2005 by the Responsible Business Forum in cooperation with Deloitte showed that already five years ago the awareness of companies' management in the matter of introducing CSR initiatives had increased in comparison to the previous years. The research included the information that "the need for a strong leadership and, above all, the comprehension of the idea as well as a proper education of the managerial staff was and will always be the biggest incentive for the development of a responsible business in Poland" [Forum...,2015, self translation].

It can be particularly observed in large corporations, especially the foreign ones, which managed to transport certain standards into the Polish market, which is frequently viewed as a difficult one, not necessarily always convinced that CSR actions are an indispensable element of effective business operations. In the initial stages, it was mostly capitalism with a human face in which business owners felt obliged to take care of the environment, still not considering it an element of running a business. Such undertakings were attributed to charity work rather than to CSR in the current understanding.

In this context, Dominika Kulczyk, a businesswoman (and the daughter of Jan Kulczyk, the richest man in Poland for many years) gave an interesting statement: "she found out about professional CSR twelve years ago, during her internship with the Rockefeller Foundation. On the one hand, she was glad that companies can now make money and provide help at the same time, however, on the other hand, she was worried that - contrary to her beliefs - decency in business was not something obvious as it required a new, separate name" [Gębura, 2017, self translation]².

This statement suggests that in certain top business environments in Poland, high business ethics have been a norm for a long time.

2.1. New roles in enterprises

Along with the rising awareness of Polish businesses regarding CSR, and their willingness to introduce social responsibility strategies a need emerged to delegate managers to implement them. This phenomenon resulted in the creation of new roles for managers. A manager is not only considered a decision-making body but is also the one who engages the team in the implementation of CSR strategies by involving them in social events. Additionally, a manager becomes responsible not only for the development of a product or a service, but also the social competence of the team members. Their supplementary role is to inform the employees about the activity companies are undertaking regarding the adopted CSR strategies, or encouraging them to take the initiative. In addition, while being engaged and socially responsible, managers become experts on social matters within their companies.

2.2. Types of managers

² Rafał Gębura's article received a special mention in the "Pióro odpowiedzialności" competition.

Assuming that a manager is a decision-making body in a powerful position within a company, it is crucial to take a closer look at the roles he/she plays in a sociological context.

Mirosława Rybak quotes R.P. Nielsen, whose classification of managers is oriented towards 'being somebody', as well as ethical virtues and faults. There are three types of managers: "the **Eichmann type** represents managers who are not concerned with the moral side of making decisions. They strive for technical excellence in the implementation of tasks without being affected by the ethical aspect of their actions. Those are the managers who are technically proficient but morally thoughtless. **Richard III type** is capable of knowing right from wrong. Nevertheless, this type is ready to resort to unethical measures in order to achieve personal gain. In fact, those gains are their only factor in making decisions. **Faust type** - the only moral rule here is the belief that the ends justify the means."

R. P. Nelson contrasts these three types with a type of an exemplary manager - **institution citizen**. Generally speaking, it is a person who, while at work, sets high ethical expectations for himself/herself. All decisions taken are always approached from the point of view of ethics [Rybak, 2004, p.117, self translation].

Sławomir Banaszak, the author of *Managerial Education: Genesis and Importance in Modern Societies*, defines managers as "representatives of an important social category in the modern society. They serve various functions: starting from strictly organisational, associated with managing people and processes, through educational and culture-making functions, setting and correcting social norms, and fulfilling functions in local communities connected with leading citizens' initiatives and other bottom-up actions" [self translation]. Banaszak also points out that "by considering the issues of the place and the role of managers in the modern society, everything associated with social impact and influence on other people, regardless of the level, seems to be valid. Any relationship of the managers with individual and social aggregates is important" [Banaszak, 2011, p. 15 [self translation].

Talking about an ideal manager, it is crucial to draw attention to the element of empathy. It should be considered both in the context of the whole organisation and from the perspective of a leader. The previously carefully formulated idea of future organisations being run with empathy has become more and more common. Businesspeople seem to be aware that empathy can be the key to an effective cooperation.

3. Managerial Social Responsibility

Nielsen's idea of an ideal manager as well as the manager described by Banaszak can both serve as the basis for the formulation of the concept of *Managerial Social Responsibility*. The proposed term of *Managerial Social Responsibility (MSR)* is complementary to the general concept of CSR, drawing attention to the people who are responsible for applying the strategies of Corporate Social Responsibility in an enterprise. The term fits into the expectations of the modern world as well as to what is expected from the managers of the future. Thus, a *socially responsible manager* is an empathetic person who, in a socially responsible manner, apart from being involved in the activities of a business, acts outside of it. They devote their personal time to social actions and are socially engaged, thus set an example for others, especially the

people in their own organisations. Such aspects are not present in the classical approach to the definition of a manager.

The form of the social engagement of managers varies. One example may be volunteering which can serve as an incentive for other employees to follow. Another example is the financial support of a chosen organisation, fund-raising or sharing one's personal financial resources with those in need. These are some of the most important factors showing real social engagement with a positive impact on other people, regardless of the amount of influence.

When defining *a socially responsible manager*, a new and increasingly visible group of managers with certain characteristics emerges. Creating such a definition becomes a specific postulate. In the era of rapid technological and sociological changes, we require a new, responsible and balanced leadership as well as leaders who actively co-create reality - true institution citizens. This type of managers creates a company based on certain values such as trust and responsibility, but they also act ethically, their actions being consistent with the values they hold. Managers in a future organisation should respect, appreciate, trust and give freedom. They should be broad-minded people, visionaries who introduce and conduct changes. An ideal, modern manager is a smart and conscious inspirer who is aware of the fact that all changes in other people result from the person who introduces the changes setting an example. A true, modern leader, *a socially responsible manager*, has a new very responsible role to not only deal with stakeholders' needs, but above all, to be an expert in social issues.

3.1. Voluntary service as a form of social activity in the business environment

Yet another argument for the concept of *Managerial Social Responsibility* is the phenomenon of managers' involvement in volunteering, which can take many forms. One of them is mentoring, i.e. sharing wisdom and experience free of charge. Another form of social activity is becoming a member of a social organisation and being engaged in its actions in a form of voluntary work. There are cases where a *socially responsible manager* burdens himself/herself with solving a particular issue and starts a new organisation. It is crucial to mention that people who run such organisations cannot have a salary for their work. Here, a good example is Bill Gates who along with his wife started the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and is now mostly occupied with running it.

3.2. Managerial Social Responsibility in Poland

Social engagement of managers, especially high-level ones, is present and visible. It is certain that the phenomenon will continue to evolve, which gives a new perspective at our economy. Based on research, one can point out certain institutions uniting *socially responsible managers* (chairmen and chairwomen of large corporations) who motivate their social activities and voluntary work by their genuine need to help.

One of them is the Liderzy Pro Bono organisation [Liderzy Pro Bono, 2020]³, until last year known as Prezesi Pro Bono which unites the leaders of

³ Liderzy Pro Bono, <https://www.liderzyprobono.pl/> (access date: 17.03.2020).

various firms and organisations who are connected by volunteering and business social engagement. They believe that voluntary work is a major driving force, especially in the face of the modern world challenges – social, ecological and economical. Currently, the organisation unites 23 chairmen, chairwomen and board members of leading organisations.

These people state that helping others is something natural. They declare to help through private financial support, engaging in specific actions, or using their knowledge and professional experience to share it with those who need it. They also stress that being a member of such an organisation mobilises them to be active in a field which is not their everyday job, thus, making them share their private time.

An interesting case worth mentioning is the example of Ewa Krupa, the head of the Orange Foundation. She is one of the people chosen from the list of 100 contributors to the improvement of digital skills in Poland. She is the one behind the success of a large multinational corporation which successfully introduces CSR and is very present on the social arena. Fourteen years ago, her company created a foundation which teaches children, the youth and seniors how to use new technologies in a safe way.

3. Public figures as *socially responsible managers*

The attitude and activity of a *socially responsible manager* are also promoted by Polish public figures.

Szymon Hołownia, a journalist and publicist, started the Kasisi Foundation supporting an orphanage in Zambia. The orphanage is run by nuns from The Congregation of the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate in Stara Wieś, Poland. By running the foundation, Hołownia, in a certain way, educates Polish companies how to help in a socially responsible way. He emphasises the fact that the support they receive from businesspeople is not for show. He does not agree to cooperate when a company wants to use the report from a visit to the orphanage as a material for the promotion of corporate social responsibility in their company or when they want to use Hołownia's image to promote their case. He really cares for his foundation not to build relations based on the division of: corporation – poverty, but rather our people - those people. They can help each other develop, and a developing employee is nothing but a benefit to a company.

One of the most recognisable and credible people who devote their lives to charity work is Jurek Owsiak who has been running the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity for the last 28 years. The foundation carries out activities in the field of healthcare, aimed at saving lives of patients, especially children, and undertaking actions to improve their health and introduce preventive health care. Every year, millions of Polish people take part in the foundation's fundraiser. Only during the 28th grand finale, the foundation raised 186 133 610 PLN.

Owsiak also organises the Pol'and'Rock Festival, formally known as Woodstock Festival Poland. This festival serves as an expression of gratitude to all the volunteers who help during the organisation of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity fundraisers.

The above-mentioned examples can definitely be classified as models of charity work or philanthropy rather than Corporate Social Responsibility, but they do affect businesspeople who willingly cooperate with such foundations.

The previously introduced results of the *CSR Managers* research [Forum..., 215] conducted by the Responsible Business Forum, definitely point to the fact that the phenomenon of social responsibility at the level of managerial staff will continue to develop. The research draws attention to the fact that over 80% of managers notice the impact of CSR on business operations. They indicate the crucial aspect of constant increase in the awareness of CSR among managerial boards. The research also confirmed the vital role of managerial staff in the development of the CSR as an idea and its practical implementation. 53% of respondents indicated that the development of responsible business would not be possible if it had not been for the involvement of certain individuals, including those who run businesses and were actively involved in the popularisation of the idea. Therefore, it is not only the awareness of Corporate Social Responsibility as a strategy for running business that is increasing, but also the role of socially responsible individuals in a specific organisation with their willingness to take initiative. However, it should be mentioned here that the study was conducted on a sample of people who deal with Corporate Social Responsibility on a daily basis. In particular, employees of Polish companies working as CSR managers. There was no top management group in this research. This also proves how innovative the notion of *Managerial Social Responsibility* is. The above-mentioned study was carried out mostly by the quantitative method. To test *socially responsible managers*, a new research perspective should be applied. In this case, it might prove more appropriate to use the qualitative method which would help to understand why such a phenomenon occurs.

The influence of MSR on organisations

Despite the fact that the demands towards a modern business still have an economic dimension and refer to efficiency, companies begin to notice the influence they have on their surroundings, thus, they try to manage this influence wisely. They take into consideration the consequences of their decisions concerning both the production zone as well as its social impact. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration the role of a manager as a trigger for those positive changes and to distinguish this phenomenon as *Managerial Social Responsibility*. The decision making always lies with the management board, and thus has a tangible influence on the whole organisation and the practical realisation of socially responsible actions. The responsibility for the consequences of implemented activities lies on them. It is the management board who, while making decisions, has to consider the arguments of all parties with which it is associated and frequently dependent on to a different degree. Implementing the idea of Corporate Social Responsibility can bring many benefits which need not be financial and do not always come immediately. Nevertheless, they are certain and can manifest in the form of a better quality of employees' work, new clients or bigger competitiveness of the enterprise on the market. The concept of CSR supports the idea of ethical profit-making based on raising the standards of cooperation with various stakeholders continuously - clients, employees or local communities. The example that people in higher position set helps to create the ethics of a whole enterprise. As indicated by M. Rybak [Rybak, 2014, p. 129, self translation], it is confirmed in research conducted by Breuner and Molander who have shown that it is the top management that has the greatest influence on ethical actions of the managers, as

well as regular employees. Members of management boards, considering the fact that they are the ones with the power and ability to shape policies, both in a formal and informal sense, have the perfect opportunity to establish and popularise a role-model, creating an authority of people who fulfil the most visible role in a company.

Conclusion

The concept of *Managerial Social Responsibility* is a new outlook on CSR as a complete issue. The concept of MSR brings to light the person without whom socially engaged activity within the corporate world could not take place. There is a need to go beyond the classical approach to socially responsible actions. MSR focuses on the actions which take place outside the area of economic activities in the classical sense. Attention is drawn to the manager who is not driven by selfishness, who works for the benefit of his/her enterprise, but also for the benefit of the community, and consequently, of the whole society. It definitely poses a question why this particular social group act in a specific way? One point of the research thesis could examine the connection to the fact that they lead a certain standard of living. Perhaps the time of consumer society is coming to its end. A society in which the paramount goal, due to the increasing standards of living in comparison to the past, is consumerism while the politics, social morality and customs submit to it. Possibly, a pivotal part plays here the high level of empathy - one of the most frequently mentioned competence of the future. As these are soft skills, many conclusions and answers can arise intuitively and be difficult to measure. Quality research conducted in a form of an in-depth interview with top managers seems to be an accurate proposition.

It is certain, however, that the values held and implemented by *socially responsible managers* are based on personal convictions 'planted' in whole corporations. Regardless of the differences of views and opinions on corporate culture, it influences the way of thinking and actions of people. This way, over time, the example set by the management board is reflected in the majority of actions taken by employees.

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Summary

Managerial Social Responsibility – a sociological approach.

The notion of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) is recognised among business people as well as among their beneficiaries. Nevertheless, this aspect of management is often considered to be lacking in the human factor. A manager is no longer only a decision-making and managerial body, but also someone who involves his/her team in applying CSR strategies by engaging in social campaigns. Moreover, by being socially engaged and responsible, the manager becomes an expert on social issues.

When defining a socially responsible manager, a new, and increasingly visible, category emerges: managers who are characterised by certain qualities. Creating a definition like that becomes a certain postulate.

The author proposes the concept of Managerial Social Responsibility as a notion that is complimentary to the general concept of CSR, and devotes particular attention to people responsible for applying the strategies of Corporate Social Responsibility to enterprises. MSR also involves managers who engage in social activity as a result of their own belief and value system and activity, rather than their profession per se.

The outlook presented offers a new research perspective and sheds new light on the functioning of the economy.

Keywords: csr, corporate social responsibility, msr, managerial social responsibility