Euromed Management

How a business school’s commitment to training future responsible managers led to the creation of a CSR knowledge test

Introduction and Challenges

The role of business schools and universities in the diffusion of CSR knowledge was emphasised at the Rio Earth Summit (1992). The measurement of knowledge was later challenged at the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit (2010) and still represents an important issue for the managers of business schools and universities to implement. In this perspective, Euromed Management has created an innovative teaching tool, a CSR knowledge test. This test has two objectives – to assess the minimum level of knowledge that a student/future responsible manager must have and to measure and evaluate an employee’s level of CSR knowledge in general. It is based both on academic knowledge and on the economic, societal, and environmental knowledge of future managers. It is important for us to involve companies and their managers in our project in order to address the shared challenges faced by these economic actors and to gather feedback and advice from stakeholders and future users of our educational tool. The project generated the following questions:

At an educational level

- What skills are being measured? What type of CSR knowledge should a responsible manager have?
- What type of CSR knowledge should an employee-citizen have?
- What immediate reaction about CSR should an employee-citizen have or acquire?
- Should there be only one measurement of CSR knowledge? If yes, when students first enter a business or an engineering school or when they leave? Should the test measure a basic level of knowledge or should it measure a basic level first and then an expert level? Is the test intended for all students in management schools or for all students in higher education?

At an organisational level

- How to develop a test that meets the goal of measuring CSR knowledge? ¹
- How to ensure that the test covers all fields of CSR?
- How to identify the reference sources of the questions? How to structure the test?
- How to automate the process of updating and correcting the test as well as of publishing the scores?

At a strategic level

- How to promote professional/academic awareness of this test and its dissemination to various CSR stakeholders?
- How to involve NGOs, consumers, representatives of civil society, business schools, universities, and all stakeholders in our project? How to integrate their recommendations?

* correspondence author
Actions taken
We have designed a specific framework compliant with ISO 26000 to construct this knowledge test based on the following chapters:

1. Organisational governance
2. Human rights
3. Labour practices
4. The environment
5. Fair operating practices
6. Consumer issues
7. Community involvement and development

We have organised sub-chapters within these seven chapters in order to better structure the test. These subchapters are exactly the same as the activity domains in ISO 26000.

We identified the fundamental academic texts and the environmental, economic, and societal references to create a database of questions that can be updated. The questions were then divided into chapters and sub-chapters and specifically linked to the appropriate reference. The test is currently in an experimental phase and will soon be distributed to students of business and engineering schools.

Results
We have created a synergy between the educational principles of our business school and its commitment to sustainable development through the distribution of this test in both the academic and business worlds.

The role of PRME/sustainability principles
We have developed an original educational tool for the academic world to evaluate the student’s/future manager’s level of CSR knowledge. This tool can also be used by companies to test the skills of their employees and by human resource departments in the recruiting process. We intend to develop our database of questions on a basic level and on an expert level and ultimately to create a CSR certification.

Finally, through our case study, we have created an innovative tool that will help to disseminate knowledge about corporate social responsibility and to quantitatively measure the skills of students/future responsible managers and employees in the same company thereby increasing the effectiveness of CSR policies.