

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN EDUCATION A CASE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

This paper considers the question of what “social responsibility” might mean, as it relates to education, so that creating a more “socially responsible education” can be better understood. There is, of course, a great deal that one could explore about notions of “the social” and notions of “responsibility,” never mind all that could be said about notions of “education” (and a great deal of philosophical writing already exists on these topics); but to keep this paper to a manageable size, the intricacies in these concepts must be swept aside, and we will have to assume that we all have reasonably confluent understandings of them in order to proceed. This paper is, therefore, despite its philosophical approach, meant more to further the work of educators than that of philosophers.

Social responsibility is an ethical or theory that an entity, be it an organization or individual, has an obligation to act to benefit society at large. Social responsibility is a duty every individual or organization has to perform so as to maintain a balance between the economy and the ecosystem. A trade-off always exists between economic development, in the material sense, and the welfare of the society and environment. Social responsibility means sustaining the equilibrium between the two. It pertains not only to business organizations but also to everyone whose any action impacts the environment. This responsibility can be passive, by avoiding engaging in socially harmful acts, or active, by performing activities that directly advance social goals.

CONTENTS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

To begin to answer the question of what “socially responsible education” may mean, we can ask whether the term “socially responsible education” describes the contents of an education (i.e., what it is hoped the students will learn), or whether it describes the way in which the education is conducted, or both. Although many people may assume the term “socially responsible” will predominantly refer to the contents of an

education, some thoughts about the way education conducts itself in regards to social responsibility merit consideration.

The conduct and contents of an education are not necessarily separate for the student. A highly regimented or brutal educational system will teach a child what regimentation and brutality are. Nonetheless, it is possible to distinguish two things that are distinct but not separate (e.g., two sides of the same coin) so that the social responsibility of the way an education conducts itself can be distinguished from the social responsibility of an education's content. In fact, the social responsibility of the way education conducts itself is a principal argument for the existence of public education, in that it is seen as responsible that a quality education be freely available to all children; and that argument has remained unchanged despite many changes in the contents of public education.

An educational system may also be socially irresponsible in the way it conducts itself if it expects children who are hungry to be able to learn, or if it counts towards their grades the homework of children who are homeless. With this in mind, we can imagine an education that is socially responsible in its content (e.g., lessons about social responsibility) yet irresponsible (perhaps unwittingly) in its conduct, and we need to think of the over-all lesson a child takes away from such dissonance (e.g., "It's only what you say that matters, not what you do."). Educational systems, therefore, need to include the ways in which they conduct themselves in their considerations of social responsibility, for if they fail to do so they are vulnerable to failing to enact what they claim to care about, and unwittingly teaching lessons in hypocrisy.

MORAL VALUES IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility *to* "the social" does not require values that rise above the quotidian expressions of values, whereas responsibility *for* "the social" often does; and therein lies a principal source of conflict. In taking responsibility for shaping, determining, and effecting "the social" (yet being in conflict with its more superficial expressions) a person is saying that the quotidian expression of values are not sufficient and need to be altered, enlarged, or refined. The luxury of simply having responsibility *to* "the social" is that a person needn't wrestle with such values dilemmas (and that this luxury is a

great reassurance and comfort is necessary to appreciate); one need only act in accord with the expression of values established by external social authorities (religious and/or secular).

While the conflict between responsibility *to* “the social” and *for* “the social” does involve values, it does not necessarily involve different sets of values, as some proponents of a “culture war” would have us believe. Instead, the conflict can be over the level of abstraction of the values that direct action. Take, for example, the value of “goodness” – a value which most people probably support, but which is abstract. Even amongst people who agree that they value “goodness,” there can be tremendous disagreement about what “goodness” means, especially in terms of daily life; e.g., does it mean forgiving and trying to rehabilitate the confessed murderer, or pursuing a notion of justice that involves executing the murderer? All cultures have abstract levels of values (e.g., “goodness,” “compassion,” etc. which I shall henceforth call *arch-values*) and very quotidian levels in which the abstraction is expressed (e.g., “goodness” involves “kindness,” and “kindness” involves “sensitivity to others,” and “sensitivity to others” involves “politeness,” and “politeness” involves holding doors open for others). However, quotidian expressions of values (unlike *arch-values*) are both culturally and historically bound. A man holding a door open for a woman is not a point of politeness in most Islamic cultures, and even in the U.S., at the height of the women’s liberation movement, it was considered to be an expression of chauvinism and, therefore, an expression of insensitivity and impoliteness.

STUDENT AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- a. Student social responsibility is the responsibility of every student for his/her actions. It is morally binding on everyone to act in such a way that the people immediately around them are not adversely affected. It is a commitment everyone has towards the society – contributing towards social, cultural and ecological causes. SSR is based on an individual’s ethics. Instead of giving importance only to those areas where one has material interests the individual supports issues for philanthropic reasons. It forms the base for CSR or Corporate Social Responsibility because if everyone in a business organization does his/her

bit the bigger things automatically fall into place. The trends however show that big charitable organizations recorded high growth due to the SR efforts of individuals and not corporates or the government. ISR may be slightly impractical, especially in the modern competitive world, where everyone works for self-interest, but it will succeed if we take decisions based on what will benefit a large number of people and respect everyone's fundamental rights. As individuals we can make our small contributions to society by donating money to trustworthy NGO's, saving our resources by reducing our consumption, E.g. by switching off lights or computers when not in use.

- b. Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR has been defined by Lord Holme and Richard Watts in The World Business Council for Sustainable Development's publication 'Making Good Business Sense' as "...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 the local community and society at large". CSR is one of the newest management strategies where companies try to create a positive impact on society while doing business. There is no clear-cut definition of what CSR comprises. Every company has different CSR objectives though the main motive is the same. All companies have a two point agenda- to improve qualitatively (the management of people and processes) and quantitatively (the impact on society). The second is as important as the first and stake holders of every company are increasingly taking an interest in "the outer circle"-the activities of the company and how these are impacting the environment and society. Social responsibility is an ethical ideology or theory that an entity, be it an organization or individual, has an obligation to act to benefit society at large. Social responsibility is a duty every individual or organization has to perform so as to maintain a balance between the economy and the ecosystem. A trade-off always[citation needed] exists between economic development, in the material sense, and the welfare of the society and environment. Social responsibility means sustaining the equilibrium between the two. It pertains not only to business organizations but also to

everyone whose any action impacts the environment. This responsibility can be passive, by avoiding engaging in socially harmful acts, or active, by performing activities that directly advance social goals.

EMERGING STATUS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Social responsibility as a non-binding, or soft law principle has received some normative status in relation to private and public corporations in the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) *Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights* developed by the UNESCO International Bioethics Committee particularly in relation to child and maternal welfare. (Faunce and Nasu 2009) The [[International Organization for Standardization]rd will "encourage voluntary commitment to social responsibility and will lead to common guidance on concepts, definitions and methods of evaluation." The standard describes itself as a guide for dialogue and language, not a constraining or certifiable management standard.

STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The social responsibility standards provide a framework for enhancing and assessing social responsibility in BC schools. Although they follow the same format as other BC performance standards (e.g., numeracy, reading, writing), they are unique in many ways. In using these standards to track the growth of schools and students, the following factors should be kept in mind

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Most teacher assessment and evaluation of social responsibility comes from accumulating observations in a wide variety of situations. Each activity or incident contributes a small amount of information. However, taken together they can provide a useful profile of student development

A full discussion of *arch-values* which might supersede their quotidian expressions would be long, and is beyond the remit of this paper. In any event, such discussion already exists in religious and philosophical literature. There is, however, one aspect of these *arch-values* that we do need to examine. *Arch-values* are frequently involved in ideas of what "the social" could or should be, and such values frequently lie at the heart of the reforms of "the social" that people seek. Ideas of what "the social" is or might

become needn't be utopian. It can simply be an understanding of something that is absent or underdeveloped in "the social." All notions of social injustice, reform, and progress have such a "could or should be" imbedded in them.

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