

# **ONE STEP AHEAD: THE EXPERIENCE AT SABANCI UNIVERSITY IN ENHANCING STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS SOCIETY**

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## **Abstract**

This paper is about a discussion on educating citizenship and social responsibilities at universities through a real life example from Turkey. The recent literature on corporate social responsibility is searching for new ways of education. This paper summarizes one of these new innovative programs, Civic Involvement Projects (CIPs) developed at Sabanci University.

The paper starts with a summary of educational issues in the corporate social responsibility literature, including examples of methods and tools used at universities across the world. This overview might help us to see the uniqueness of the CIP experience. The paper concludes with suggestions to universities that are developing or planning to develop their own social responsibility programs.

The main question will be to find the ways in reaching major goal of education for social responsibility to assist in understanding, values, and action skills that will help students to work with others to improve the quality and sustainability of their natural and social environments. There is more than one solution in achieving this goal; hence this paper will show just one of these potential solutions based on a real life experience. The methodology of the paper will be a literature review and a case study.

## INTRODUCTION

The surge for the main goal of higher education is still an ongoing debate: whether the main goal of education should be training for jobs or it will be preparing students to become stewards of the earth and participants in democracy for global social justice. It seems there are four main obstacles in academia that prevents this problem to be resolved easily (Andrzejewski and Alessio, 1999). First, many educators and policymakers don't experience or see the immediate consequences of global, ethical and social problems, thus they distance themselves from them. Second, these global, ethical and social issues seem so depressing that people tend to think that we can have little or no influence on these issues. Third, teachers have been taught to avoid "political" issues that differ from the conventionally accepted beliefs embedded in the traditional curriculum. Finally, as discussed earlier, educators have not usually been taught about issues of social and global responsibility in our own school experiences. To make things worse, as Homer's study (1999) show many persons active in the teaching and research of Business Ethics believe that neither their teaching nor their research "count" for merit salary increases and promotion/tenure decisions at their institutions, and that few enjoy high levels of support from deans, faculty, or students.

When these obstacles are overcome, the method of teaching students social responsibility will become the main theme in the literature. This paper aims to bring forward one of these new methods that has been applied in a university in the last seven years. By describing the method developed, it will become clear what the challenges stand in front of education.

The paper has two main parts. While part one summarizes the literature review on citizenship and social responsibility at education, part two will introduce the Civic Involvement Projects

(CIPs) developed at Sabanci University as a new mechanism of inducing social responsibility into the curriculum.

## **PART ONE: CITIZENSHIP AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AT EDUCATION**

The title of the Wilhite and Silver's (2005) article, "A False Dichotomy for Higher Education: Educating Citizens vs. Educating Technicians", is a good provocative start for an article. It shows the popular debate about the mission of higher education: either giving students discipline-specific competence or preparing students for lives of moral and civic responsibility necessary to support a democratic society.

An extension of the question might be why shouldn't the university hold both missions. Do these two goals intrinsically contradict? Rather than having a philosophical discussion on the mission of the university, this paper moves on to the next step and searches for an answer to the following question: how a university could educate its students to become good citizens.

It might seem a simple task to give students learning opportunities for addressing the real-life problems of their communities. By understanding problems, students and faculty might contribute to the search for solutions to these problems. This is rather difficult task considering the complex, interdisciplinary, interdependent and multi-cultural context of real-life problems.

As Jongh and Prinsloo (2005) highlights:

“There is a need to move away from a measured, linear curriculum to a ‘transformatory’ curriculum. Transformatory education has as its starting point that ‘for learners to change their meaning schemes (specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions) they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences, which in turn leads to a perspective transformation’”.

The need for transformation has been acute particularly after the recent business misconduct examples of Enron and WorldCom that have given rise to the questioning of the basic notions of citizenship and profitability further. There is a great deal of cynicism about the social responsibility of corporations. Many stakeholders see corporate citizenship as a window-dressing activity of companies to hide their abusive practices. That is why there has been increase in ethics education in business schools and among business people. But more importantly, the content of education has come under scrutiny. For example, the management guru Mintzberg (2004) calls for a 'third-generation management development' where managers are reflective practitioners. This might necessitate providing them the ability to recognize and talk about ethical problems more accurately and easily. According to Crane and Matten (2004), this might be a three step process requiring:

- “1) identifying the situation where ethical decision-making is involved;
- 2) understanding the culture and values of the organization; and
- 3) evaluating the impact of the ethical decision on the organization.”

A similar call for an intensive change is also raised by the partnership of the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) and the United Nations Global Compact in 2004. These two influential international organizations have started an initiative to develop a new generation of globally responsible leaders and managers by inviting business schools and companies from all parts of the world to work together. They will investigate current business school curricula and propose changes on a global scale that will be both enforceable and teachable. Further, the United Nations decided to name the period of 2005-2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in the Johannesburg meeting.

The Aspen Institute published reports in 2001 and 2003 entitled as Beyond Grey Pinstripes (Aspen/WRI, 2003) that showed a growing interest and consolidation of business ethics and responsibility related topics in business schools' teaching and research agendas. As business schools and business have been a driving force, the recent educational programs are mainly designed for corporate social responsibility (CSR) rather than citizenship (EBIAS' study (2005). Matten and Moon's study (2004) analyze the practice of European educational programs in business ethics and sustainability and concludes that the term CSR is an umbrella term covering from business ethics to Environmental or Ecological Management. Matten and Moon's (2004) survey conducted in 2003 and consisted of the responses of 65 institutions across Europe. The results shows that the goals of teaching CSR are categorized under four headings:

- provision of graduates with CSR skills,
- supply of CSR education for practitioners,
- specialist CSR education for industries, and
- research to advance knowledge in CSR.

The hyphenated interest in CSR can be seen vividly in Europe. For example, European Commission's (2001) Green Paper aims to promoting a European framework for CSR by giving emphasis in company training and life-long learning. A year later, European Commission (2002) reported the following:

- "CSR is behavior by businesses over and above legal requirements, voluntarily adopted because businesses deem it to be in their long-term interest;
- CSR is intrinsically linked to the concept of sustainable development: businesses need to integrate the economic, social and environmental impact in their operations;
- CSR is not an optional "add-on" to business core activities - but about the way in which businesses are managed."

In parallel to the developments at the policy level, business schools in Europe have increasingly started new CSR models and programs. A survey (Matten and Moon, 2004) highlights the fact that CSR in European business education is partly grounded in the environmental agenda, followed with a concern with ethics. Dedicated CSR modules and CSR programs in European business schools mainly target graduate level students, with only 9% of them are designed for undergraduate students. Similar results are reported in European Academy of Business in Society (EABIS) (2005) study too. There seems to be three sources of educational CSR programs: university programs, in company training (such as Intel Ireland, Lloyds TSB, Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, and Shell), and third party programs offered by consultancy firms or associations (such as CSR Europe, World Business Council for Sustainable Development) (EABIS, 2005).

Compulsory modules and courses on CSR are offered by 27% of all respondent institutions but another 38% of respondent institutions indicate that CSR are embedded in other modules and courses, while 47% of respondent institutions have optional modules (Matten and Moon, 2004).

The call for transformation in education is not only preparing new curriculum but also it includes changes in the pedagogies adopted in CSR programs, courses and modules. Muijen (2004) puts it clearly that CSR is based on pluralism in value perspectives and aims at an empowerment strategy by means of integrating (not “managing”) diversity and cultural change. The perspective of change through dialogue is proposed as a means of innovating the curriculum and the primary processes of student education. As Muijen (2004) describes:

“In a dialogical and multi-cultural context, other interpretations on (human) nature are not just feasible, but likely to occur. Dialogue facilitates social dynamics in such a way that our organizational and cultural interpretation of “social responsibility” reflects the

needs, wants, motives and values of all participants in the dialogue, i.e. the stakeholders.”

Another proposal for the pedagogy of educating CSR is active learning (EABIS, 2005). For example, Oikos foundation, leading international student organization for sustainable economics and management, offers active learning in its winter school program (EABIS, 2005). One type of active learning is having community service projects embedded within academic coursework. The US experience shows that nearly one-third of all K–12 schools and half of public high schools provide such service-learning programs (Wilhite and Silver, 2005). Some of the benefits of these programs are listed as: improved academic achievement, positive attitude toward school, increased civic engagement, social maturity, concern for others, emotional intelligence, positive self-concept, and reduced involvement in risky behavior. It is further discussed that students working with other students, in comparison to students who interact primarily with an adult teacher, are more likely to be adventurous and innovative in dealing with new information as well as more likely to develop sophisticated view of how epistemological beliefs are constructed. The studies about the impact of service-learning programs on college students seem to show similar benefits. It is shown that college students who have service-learning experience show greater evidence of community involvement following graduation than do students who did not have such experience.

It is reported that “student’s self reported enhanced understanding and interest in issues of business ethics is present when multiple pedagogical methods, e.g., case studies, lectures, assignments, and an Oxford-style debate, are applied by a number of faculty members” (Spain, Engle, and Thompson, 2005). Table 1 shows the teaching tools utilized at the European courses where inviting business speakers and using real-life case-studies are widely adopted tools (Matten and Moon, 2004).

Table 1. Teaching tools adopted in the European CSR programs

<b>Teaching tool</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents using the tool (%)</b>
Business speakers	32
CSR case-studies	25
NGO speakers	20
CSR professional speakers	17
Internships	6
Communications/media speakers	5
Other, the five most popular: E-learning; Debates/discussion forums; Simulations; Audiovisual aids; International student exchange	17

Source: Matten and Moon, 2004.

## **PART TWO: CASE STUDY**

Studies about the CSR practices in Turkey are rather limited (Küskü and Zarkada-Fraser, 2004; Cetindamar and Arıkan, 2006). However, the business practices of CSR in Turkey seem to be mainly in the realm of philanthropy (Küskü and Zarkada-Fraser, 2004). For example, the largest telecommunication company Turkcell's programme -- Contemporary Girls of Contemporary Turkey -- provides scholarships to girls living in the Eastern Turkey. Another large conglomerate Ülker's contributions to the 10 Billion Oak Tree Campaign which seeks to protect the environment is another example.

The educational practices of CSR are another neglected research topic. To our knowledge, the only available study analyzed engineering curriculums of Turkish universities. The findings revealed that the emphasis given to environment and sustainable development in engineering curriculums is quite limited (Unal et. al., 2004).

The following is an innovative model of CSR practice in education. It is based on service-learning through social responsibility and participatory democracy at a fundamental level.

Briefly, the case will be CIP projects exercised at Sabanci University, which was established officially in 1996 in Istanbul Turkey but started its formal education in the fall of 1999. The university set its mission as:

“Our mission is to develop competent and confident individuals, enriched with the ability to reflect critically and independently, combined with a strong sense of social responsibility; and, to contribute to the development of science and technology, as well as disseminating the knowledge created to the benefit of the community.”

Following this mission, CIPs were developed in 1999 and have been carried out since then. CIPs are a compulsory part of the course program of Sabanci University because the university believes that pointing out the realities of life and learning to play an active part in understanding these, is an indispensable part of quality university education. It should be noted that we have the complete support of the university administration for our work, which surely allows us to carry out our program with not only ease but also with financial backing. Our program is very much a grass roots one, following the educational philosophy of Vygotsky in that students create their own knowledge. In this case, it is truly learning by doing rather than focusing on theory and academic work. By being involved in various issues at the grass-roots level, students gain a better understanding of the complexity of issues, and learn to see that they can make a difference

through their direct involvement. Our program fits within the university's philosophy, which aims to see our students graduate as well-rounded individuals in addition to being academically and professionally successful.

CIPs are hands-on learning program for understanding participatory democracy, where students take active roles in civil society, dealing with various problems and working in cooperation with national and international Civil Society Organizations and state institutions. CIP is a program believing that individuals are responsible for the society and the world they are living in. We argue that if one believes in the democratic process, one needs to understand that there is a responsibility by all individuals to the society that extends beyond voting. The Turkish context presents several different realities to common practices of civic participation as well as an understanding of democracy. With 59 governments in 83 years, 3 military and 2 velvet coups, it can hardly be expected that citizens will exercise their democratic responsibilities nor to become involved in issues of social responsibility on their own. CIP strives for internalization of participatory and democratic values through active involvement with (mostly) the local community at different levels.

Within our program, we provide the necessary tools for people – our students as well as those they work with - to realize themselves. This is done through teamwork, through empowerment, through trainings, and of course through direct involvement. With the exception of the coordinator and office assistants, all involved in CIP are students. All projects operate in teams, with students choosing the topic they wish to work in. Teams are led by supervisors, students who have previously completed at least one project, and have passed the application process – written application, oral interview and case study as well as recommendation from their team supervisor - to officially become part of the larger CIP Team. The past two years we have had more than twice as many students apply to be supervisors as we have capacity for, verifying that

many of these young people not only get the point of what we do and wish to become more active but also wish to stay involved in the program in a position of responsibility. Team Supervisors meet with their teams once a week and join the team each week for the implementation of the project. They are responsible for keeping attendance, for overseeing the curriculum for the specific project and for creating enthusiasm for the project and the team. The Team Supervisors are overseen by the Advisory Supervisors, students who have at least 3 years of involvement within the program. The Advisory Supervisors are responsible for trouble shooting, giving and being available for advice, and for ensuring that all official permission and contacts have not only been obtained but are maintained. The Advisory Supervisors also implement the various trainings for the different subjects we address, bringing in experts when necessary, delivering the trainings themselves when possible. The third tier of this student-led structure is Event Supervisor, a small group of the most dedicated students who are in their senior year – or the exceptional student in their junior year – who are responsible for our larger events, for being available to give trainings to both team members the other supervisors, for site-visits to the projects, and for filling in when the Team or Advisory Supervisors for whatever reason are not available. With this structure, our students are empowered, empower each other, learn leadership, learn responsibility, encourage creativity and in short, keep the program running.

Since 1999, as Table 2 shows, we have carried out 231 projects, with more than 2,000 students and 323 students volunteering in positions of responsibility (some volunteer their entire student career). The chart below shows the different projects we work with and the total number to date:

Table 2. CIP Projects

Project Type	Number of Projects
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Children	99
Research and technology	3
Health and sexual responsibility	10
Traffic	1
Earthquake relief	3
Southeastern Turkey (children)	36
Animal rights	3
Handicapped	13
Human rights	30
Environment	26
Elderly	9
Women	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>

It is clear that Sabanci University students develop a better understanding of social issues, be they poverty, shortcomings of the state educational system, environmental issues, the realities of elderly in nursing homes, becoming more comfortable working with the handicapped, human rights, and other related concepts through their involvement in the program. They also develop a sense of empathy, a greater appreciation for their own fortunes, and learn to see themselves in a different light as they grow as individuals through their involvement.

In the summers and during semester break, we also work in Southeast Turkey. This is the least developed region of the country, a region torn by conflict for 15 years, with high levels of poverty, a strong military presence and few opportunities for those who live there. Our students work together with youth from the region, often university students themselves, with children who live there. As our students are based there for a minimum of 2 weeks, they learn to see the

realities for what they are and the regional problems on a different level. We believe that giving a human face to any given problem does much towards dispelling prejudices and towards opening minds to think more objectively.

We have seen a number of our students go on to graduate work addressing a number of the issues we work with in CIP. Some examples include a former student now at LSE completing his PhD in Development Economics, another at CEU working on gender, another who has just completed his Master's in Development Administration at University College London, one at a prominent State University in Istanbul working on a Master's in Sociology focusing on the lack of correlation between rights and practices for handicapped; all these are pursuing their graduate degrees as a result of their involvement in CIP.

We also have former students who were active in CIP working in the corporate world who continue to be involved in issues of social responsibility as well as try to bring the concept to a higher level in their respective jobs. One, who works for a major multinational company here in Istanbul, makes sure to give our program sponsorship for 'Sun Day,' our end-of-year celebration for the upwards of 3,000 we work with directly in Istanbul throughout the academic year as well as contributing to other events and Civil Society Organizations throughout Turkey. Another has been able to implement a comprehensive recycling program in the company where she works. Another keeps active with our program, helping to write our training manual, 'Human Dignity for Human Security.'

Again, focusing on the Turkish context, we keep our focus on our program on social responsibility and participatory democracy at a fundamental level. We are not without our critics, particularly those who question us on why such a program should be mandatory for all students. We have seen that such criticism comes from those who believe such work should be

done on a voluntary basis. While we do not disagree, as mentioned previously in this case study, the realities we live here are different to those elsewhere who may have a more established history of volunteering. We have found that many organizations do not wish to work with young people as they are seen as not being responsible. Many organizations here work professionally and do not have much of a structure for volunteers; our eager yet inexperienced students do not always offer them much. So we have the double task of trying to set up a structure in which our students can learn about social responsibility and be directly involved in addressing various issues as well as trying to convince those active in civil society that with a bit of support, tolerance and guidance, young people can in fact contribute much to the goals they are working towards. One of the ironies of our program is that we work more with state-run organizations, namely the Ministry of Education and Social Services, than with those of civil society. The challenge of this is that anytime there is a change in the administration, we essentially need to start from scratch, as it is essential to obtain permission from the state organizations to carry out our work with them.

Those of us working as permanent office staff – the coordinator, program manager and 2 full-time assistants see to the official paperwork, to establishing. Fostering and maintaining relationships with all those we work with, and in general, overseeing the general program and encouraging the students on the official CIP Team. We believe that part of our success is due to the ‘familial’ manner in which we operate: our doors are always open and for the most part, we are always available. We join the All-CIP Team meetings and pop in on the individual team meetings as well. Though we have a structure, we make efforts to keep our interactions on a horizontal level. Students come to see us more as friends rather than as instructors.

With varying degrees of success, we were able to implement programs similar to CIP in 18 state universities throughout Turkey with the financial assistance of Open Society Institute Assistance

Foundation. Several universities implemented the program as a club while others followed our example and held the program as a class. Only three universities have CIP as requirements and those is faculty specific; several others offer CIPs as an elective. While we have not been able to carry out a full research on the different levels for success – or lack thereof – in establishing CIP at other institutions of higher learning, it is apparent that any such program needs proper administration, not just staff willing to help out. Those schools that have seen to employing personnel to oversee the CIP-like program have been more successful at maintaining the projects than those who left it to a club or to staff volunteers. In a country without a strong history of volunteering or civic involvement, it is hardly surprising that both students and university's in general need a stronger structure to successfully implement the learning opportunity and thus gained principles that CIP aims to achieve.

Within our own program at Sabanci University, when we ask students what they think about the requirement of CIP, 85% consistently agree that the projects should be mandatory. As one student put it so succinctly, 'If I did not have to continue with my project, I would not have and I would not have had the satisfaction and warmth that I have had from working with these children whose lives are more difficult than I could have imagined.' (Anonymous, CIP survey, 2004). Another student responded, that now they didn't even want to think of the possibility of the one-year participation not being mandatory, as they might have missed such opportunity with their 'laziness' or 'inattention' to volunteering at the beginning of their university life.

In a survey conducted in 2004, students active in the CIP program said they considered the 'work' that they have done in the CIP Program as valuable as coursework for their personal, social, intellectual development. Building social awareness, personal development and empathy were more important than building political awareness for these respondents which confirms our belief that our students are indeed getting the point of our program.

We would like to add a quote from a student who participated in one of our summer projects in southeast Turkey: ‘for the first time in my life, I was one hundred percent sure that I was doing something right, and something good, and for the first time in my life, I was proud of what I was doing.’ Sometimes it just comes down to providing the opportunity for young people to develop themselves.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper has raised the issue of finding a way of supporting and guiding students to work with others to improve the quality and sustainability of their natural and social environments. The integration of social responsibility into education is a daunting – and rewarding - task of assisting students in understanding diverse values and gaining action skills.

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, there is more than one solution in bringing social responsibility into higher education; hence this paper shows just one of these potential solutions based on a real life experience. As Jongh and Prinsloo (2005) describe, education on sustainability and social responsibility should embrace pedagogy of critique, possibility and engagement. Among these three, possibility is particularly important; we interpret it to mean that we, as ordinary people, might live our lives and actively participate in creating a safer, more humane, sustainable world (Andrzejewski and Alessio, 1999). Based on our experience in CIP projects, we believe that by being involved in various issues at the grass-roots level, students gain a better understanding of the complexity of issues, and learn to see that they can make a difference through their direct involvement.

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## BIOGRAPHIES

**Dilek Cetindamar:** She received her B. S. degree from Industrial Engineering Department at Boğaziçi University in 1989, her M.A degree from Economics Department at BU in 1992, and her Ph.D. degree from Management Department at Istanbul Technical University in 1995. Before her appointment to the Graduate School of Management at Sabanci University in 1999, she worked in the following universities: Boğaziçi University, Case Western Reserve University (USA), Portland State University (USA), and Chalmers University of Technology (Sweden). She participated in many international projects, including United Nations and European Union projects. She has seven books, 15 book chapters, and 22 papers published in various international journals. She received an encouragement award from Turkish Science Academy in 2003. Her main interest and research topics are Technology Management, Strategy Management, Development Economics and Entrepreneurship. She has memberships in the following associations: Technology Management Association, International Association for Management of Technology, Schumpeterian Society, and Academy of Management.

**Tara Hopkins:** She is Coordinator for Civic Involvement Projects, a required hands-on learning program for Social Responsibility/Participatory Democracy for all undergraduate students at Sabanci University in İstanbul, which she initiated in 1998. The program involves students in various issues: children (impoverished, refugees, orphans, handicapped, internally displaced), elderly, human rights, status of women, Sexual Responsibility and environmental issues. Under her guidance, with support from the Open Society Institute, similar programs have been started in twenty universities throughout Turkey as well as in Kyrgistan and Tajikistan. She has written the training manual *Human Dignity for Human Security*. She has carried out trainings on civic involvement in Turkey and Afghanistan, has presented at numerous international conferences (Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, South Korea, Spain, and the USA). She is also a founding member of MARE, social and ecological youth network, and has worked to organize youth exchanges in Greece, Jordan, and Lebanon. She started the Ashoka program in Turkey; she is a member of FeDem and active in peace education. Tara, is from the USA, studied anthropology and Foreign Language Teaching and has taught Spanish in the US, English in Mexico, Japan, Turkey and the USA. She has been working in Turkey since 1989.