CSR, Cultural Change and Employees: Strategic Choices

A number of authors have been critical of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) based on its managerialist, and fundamentally instrumental conceptualization (See Cassell & Lee 2011; Denison 1996; Parker 2002; Scherer & Palazzo 2007). Moreover, employees are rarely engaged in the development of CSR strategy, and are seen as recipients of CSR rather than active participants in its delivery (Barker, Ingesoll & Teal 2013; Jones, Marshall & Mitchell 2007; Muthuri, Matten & Moon 2009; Young 2013; Young & Thyil 2009).

Further, CSR is closely linked to cultural change within organisations, particularly in relation to the need for cultural change as a precursor for effective CSR implementation (Grant 2012; Jones, Phelps, Bigley 2007, Maon, Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010). However, there is a dearth of research into the effect that CSR implementation has ex-post on shaping a new set of cultural norms and values.

Thus, the aim of this research is to explore the role employee involvement in CSR activities has on organisational culture.

A qualitative research methodology was adopted, involving a detailed case-study analysis of an Australian wine producer where interviews were held with 20 senior managers. The key driver for CSR within this organisation is based on the public perception of alcohol as a health and safety risk to society, which forms the basis for employee CSR programs focused on the responsible consumption of alcohol and volunteering.

By drawing on the ‘stakeholder culture’ continuum developed by Jones, Felps & Bigley (2007), we argue that employee involvement in CSR activities can lead to changes in organisational culture, from self-interest to greater concern for society. Further, we propose that this cultural change has the potential to affect positive change outside organisational boundaries. Through the analysis of employees as central actors in CSR strategy development and implementation, these propositions offer novel insights for practitioners and researchers in moving beyond normative and instrumental views of CSR.

References:


