# Corporate Social Responsibility in Higher Education Institutions: Istanbul Bilgi University Case

**Gresi Sanje Dahan, PhD**
Assistant Professor
Istanbul Bilgi University
Advertising Department
Kazım Karabekir Cad. No:1 34060 Eyup
Istanbul, Turkey

**Isil Senol, PhD**
Teaching Assistant
Istanbul Bilgi University
Advertising Department
Kazım Karabekir Cad. No:1 34060 Eyup
Istanbul, Turkey

## Abstract

*Universities, especially private ones are in need of strong corporate strategies in order to be successful in the highly competitive education industry. In this respect, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) becomes one of the highly preferred strategies by higher education institutions for gaining a good reputation and a competitive advantage. This study aims to analyze Istanbul Bilgi University, in the context of social responsibility practices. The major finding of the study is that in order for an institution to be successful in CSR strategy, CSR actions has to be internalized and must be supported by the management.*

**Keywords:** Corporate social responsibility, higher education, competitive advantage, reputation.

## 1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is defined through the ethical relationship and transparency of the company with all its stakeholders that has a relationship as well as with the establishment of corporate goals that are compatible with the sustainable development of society, preserving environmental and cultural resources for future generations, respecting diversity and promoting the reduction of social problems (Filho et al. 2010). While CSR points out a way for companies to contribute to the well-being of the society, it also gives the opportunity to create a true competitive advantage and positive reputation for the business world (Smith 2007, Porter and Kramer 2006).

Under the new circumstances such as the globalization, privatization of the education institutions and competition in higher education industry, many higher education institutions are adapting a more business-like approach in order to compete and survive in the changing face of the industry (Weymans 2010, Gumport 2000, Goia and Thomas 1996). And during the adaptation of this business-like approach, some institutions are discovering the importance of corporate image, corporate identity, corporate reputation and mainly CSR as a reputation and an advantage building strategy (Atakan and Eker 2007, Stensaker 2007, Porter and Kramer 2006, Melewar and Akel 2005). Although issues of CSR have always been a part of the educational mission of higher education institutions, through implementing CSR strategies, higher education institutions are now using this approach as a part of their competitive strategy. Hence, by developing such strategies higher education institutions are also discovering the opportunity to move the focus beyond the classroom into their own institutional operations.

The challenge and dynamics of higher education is also valid for Turkey. Higher education institutions in Turkey also started to adapt business-like approach since the dynamics of Turkish higher education industry are not so different from the rest of the world. After the foundation of the first private university in 1984 (Atakan and Eker 2007), a serious competition among higher education institutions has occurred within the national boundaries.

Although the industry and the demand is expanding rapidly, applications for the national university entrance examination have tripled since 1980 (Soktaris et al. 2011), private universities are still trying to prove their educational quality over the state universities, stay financially sustainable and compete with each other at the same time. In order to be ahead of their competitors, private universities are in search of sustainable differentiating strategies, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and Istanbul Bilgi University stands as a successful example of this practice (Atakan and Eker 2007). Istanbul Bilgi University starting from its establishment committed itself to the propagation of democratic values and human rights, to critical thought and to effective intervention in the social fabric of its multicultural environment (Sokratis et al 2011). Bilgi sustainably continued to create a cultural and scientific environment that has strong ties with every part of society, managed to apply a successful CSR strategy and gained a good reputation as well as a strong competitive advantage.

This study aims to provide the evidences on how to apply a successful CSR strategy by the example of Istanbul Bilgi University. In order to present that the study starts by explaining the general framework of the higher education institutions as business operations. The literature review of CSR in terms of value building especially through positive reputation and competitive advantage is explained. The next section is focused on Turkish higher education where the Turkish higher education system is explained briefly as an introduction to the main case; Istanbul Bilgi University. After revealing the data collection method, as for the findings of the study Istanbul Bilgi University's social responsibility acts is explained and discussed. Finally, the key factors on Bilgi's successful CSR applications are presented.

## 2. Literature Review

This section presents a review of previous studies on higher education industry and on the value of corporate social responsibility in terms of competitive advantage and reputation. Additionally an overview of the Turkish education industry and Istanbul Bilgi University is added.

### 2.1. Higher Education Institutions as Business Operations

The decades following II World War higher education institutions acknowledged that the activities regarded as the legitimate province of public higher education was changed such as educating the masses, advancing knowledge through research, contributing to economic development by employing workers and developing industrial applications (Gumport 2000). The message for the academia was clear: academia is not allowed to lock themselves up in their ivory towers anymore (Weymnas 2010). Although that was the case still the academia enjoyed to be self-contained, governing itself and focusing on knowledge activities that it determined largely for itself (Weymnas 2010). Yet this was in the past century.

The globalization has inevitably embraced higher education industry and the higher education institutions started to experience significant shifts in recent years. Less than a generation ago academic institutions were allowed to act in a self-contained manner and thrive in an environment of predictable funding and student enrollment with little overt competition among institutions (Dill 2002, Goia and Thomas 1996). However recent changes have casted higher education institutions into an ambiguous arena that looks more like a consumer goods marketplace (Goia and Thomas 1996). Additionally under the highlights of globalization, higher education institutions had to consider the competition in order to attract high quality students and academic staff not only within national borders but also in an international level (Melewar and Akel 2005). As the result of this new competitive environment, many higher education institutions started to adopt a more business-like approach in order to compete and survive in the changing education industry. This "strategic change" in academia is now creating its own ambiguity to the institutions that are not accustomed thinking and acting strategically (Goia and Thomas 1996). Since it is not possible to turn back the clock in this globalized post-national world, there is no alternative but to reform universities by making them more adapted to new economic realities (Weymnas 2010).

No doubt these are difficult times for those who manage higher education institutions. In addition to a difficult global competitive environment, financial realities loom large alongside pressure to consider alternative structural and resource commitments to various knowledge areas (Gumport 2000). Thus although it seems hard to imagine an alternative other than the common business like approaches or to make a return to the traditional model of the past, many academics are disturbed even from the idea of managing higher education institutions in a market-oriented manner (Weymnas 2010).

Moreover since the impact of this market-oriented approach on the overall society is unknown (Dill 2003), to overcome the resistance of the academics become another important challenge for the management of the higher education institutions. Despite of these problems, the industrialization process of the higher education is real and higher education's inability or unwillingness to adapt will result in a loss of centrality and perhaps ultimately a loss of viability (Gumport 2000). Yet it is easier said than done.

One of the major differentiation factors between a higher education institution and a traditional corporate entity is the understanding of the "customer". A traditional corporation can easily and legitimately talk about the "customer". Yet to label the students as customers in higher education is nearly a sin. When students are turned into customers, it can destroy the core understanding of the education as well as the student-academic relation. Therefore higher education institutions may face a major change in their own values and norms while adapting the business-like approach, even if that is not an intended outcome (Stensaker 2007). Second differentiation point between a higher education institution and traditional corporate entity lies in the broader responsibility of the higher education institution. The root metaphor in a corporate model of production is to produce and sell goods and services, train some of the workforce, advance economic development, and perform research (Gumport 2000).

Although defining the role of higher education institutions is a topic that has to be studied separately and discussed deeply, in order to make a comparison between higher education and traditional corporate, the responsibility of the higher education institutions can be summarized as transferring the knowledge to the new generations by teaching, training and doing research; determining a balance between basic and applied research and between professional training and general education; meeting the priority needs of their respective societies (UNESCO 1991). Moreover higher education are expected to function as social institutions actively for the development of individual learning and human capital, the socialization and cultivation of citizens and political loyalties, the preservation of knowledge, and the fostering of other legitimate pursuits for the nation-state (Gumport 2000). Thus the behavior and actions of the higher education institutions reflect directly back to the society through their alumni and through their daily operations higher education institutions have a direct and immediate impact on the society.

Therefore although managing a higher education institution in a traditional market-oriented manner is impossible and simply wrong, still higher education institutions need to be managed in order to meet the challenges of the increased competition. And as Stensaker (2007) pointed out the challenge for higher education institutions and their managements is to balance the need for adjusting to a changing world while maintaining the organizational identities and the inherent characteristics of higher education.

## 2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility as a Value Proposition

CSR is defined as the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectancies that society has of organizations at a given point in time (Valentine and Fleischman 2008). This definition is based on Carroll's study (1979) where he defined four components of social responsibility and broadened the scope of its understanding (Maignan 2001, Popa 2010). Carroll suggested that businesses have to fulfill economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities in order to address its entire obligations to society. Economic responsibilities designate the obligations for businesses to be productive and profitable (Maignan 2001). Legal responsibilities refer to the framework of legal requirements which businesses need to meet while practicing economic duties (Carroll 1979). Ethical responsibilities are the defined appropriate behavior by established norms that businesses should follow, and philanthropic responsibilities reflect the common desire to see businesses get actively involved in the betterment of society (Maignan 2001).

In the current global market environment, the social pressures on businesses have increased and the concern for the CSR is not manifested only by academics but by the public and the shareholders as well (Popa 2010). Unfortunately many companies awoke to the importance of CSR only after being surprised by public responses to issues they had not previously thought were part of their business responsibilities (Porter and Kramer 2006). Especially after the negative public responses and global boycotts, there has been a trend toward promoting corporate changes and CSR implications that has associated with business strategies of the companies (Filho et al. 2010). Moreover, in the implementation process, companies had realized that, if used properly, CSR strategies can be profitable and create value propositions such as competitive advantage and corporate reputation (Smith 2007, Porter and Kramer 2006, Husted and Allen 2001).

In general, competitive advantage can be achieved through internal resources and obtained by implementing valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable actions (Barney 1991). Consequently when CSR actions are implemented properly and internalized within the company, the actions become at least and the actions can create a competitive advantage for the company. And yet, if a company can manage to develop CSR projects connected to its core business, it can also create valuable and this time rare CSR actions and thereby a strong and unique competitive advantage (Filho et al. 2010). Thus when companies incorporate CSR into their strategy, in the long-run CSR can produce a sustainable and inimitable competitive advantage since it will be built over time as the result of a consistent strategy (Smith 2007).

Identity, image and reputation is in the main agenda of an organization and corporate communication activities addresses the key questions of what distinctive attributes will be assigned to an organization (Mohamad et al. 2007). In terms of corporate reputation, many companies use CSR initiatives to justify the grounds that they will improve the company's image, strengthen its brand, enliven morale, and even raise the value of its stock (Porter and Kramer 2006). Reputation is formed over time by repeated impressions of the corporate image whether positive or negative (Gray and Balmer 1998). Therefore it is suggested that reputation has also need to be based on accomplishments or worthwhile efforts to gain public's goodwill, it has to be more than mere publicity efforts (Mohamad et al. 2007). Moreover it is commonly accepted that a good reputation can create a strong competitive advantage (Filho et al. 2010, Smith 2007). Consequently CSR has emerged as a valuable and necessary strategy to the competitive business environment of today. Yet besides creating a good reputation and a competitive advantage, CSR can help the business world to contribute to the well-being of the society, as successful corporations need a healthy society (Porter and Kramer 2006).

Since higher education institutions have begun to behave in a business-like manner, they also need to be managed in the same manner. Therefore implementing CSR strategies in a higher education institution should be considered in order to obtain a true competitive advantage and a positive reputation. Moreover practicing what is taught and thereby generating a real example of the academic knowledge can create a unique proposition for any higher education institution. Besides, as the complexity of higher education operations increasingly overlap with societal interests, higher education institutions are pressured for responsible practices. Thus responsible higher education practices not only will contribute to the well-being of the shareholders and the public in general, but also these practices will increasingly become a long-term value proposition for the institution itself.

## 2.3. An Overview of the Turkish Higher Education Industry

In 1981 a law concerning higher education has institutionalized extensive government regulations and interference in university affairs in Turkey. Following the law, a Council for Higher Education was established in 1982 in order to design, direct and administer many of the essential activities of the higher education system (Atakan and Eker 2007). Since then education in Turkey is centrally directed, controlled and generally funded by the Ministry of Education (Mızıkacı 2003). Turkish higher education consists of all post-secondary programs in universities, faculties and vocational education institutions and all universities are ruled by the Higher Education Law (Akduman et al. 2001). Even the curriculum was dictated by law, this has been changed and loosened after the 1990s (Akduman et al. 2001). After the Council for Higher Education had allowed non-profit foundation universities with an enactment in 1984, the first private university in Turkey was established (Atakan and Eker 2007). Before that higher education institutions in the country were only the state universities. Like in any other country, free education is provided at the public schools from kindergarten to higher education and the government gives scholarships to students with insufficient financial opportunities (Mızıkacı 2003).

The main difference between the private and the state universities is the tuition fee. Since the state universities are supported by the government, students are asked to pay a "contribution fee" for every semester whereas in a private university, students have to pay a rather high amount for the tuition (Atakan and Eker 2007). Inherently, with the high amount of tuition fees, private universities offer a lower student-teacher ratio to their students (Tansel and Gungor 2002) and their financial structure is not subject to bureaucracy (Akduman et al. 2001). As a result, private universities provide better and updated resources for both students and academics, resulting a move of the most talented academics affiliated with state universities to the private ones (Atakan and Eker 2007). It is commonly accepted that the establishment of private universities triggered the competition among the higher education institutions.

Considering the fact that in 2002 there were 53 state and 23 private universities and higher education institutions (Mızıkacı 2003) whereas this number has increased to 34 private and 94 state universities in 2010 (YOK 2011), one can easily state that this is just the beginning of the national competition. Yet this competition seems to be faced more by the private universities since they receive a large proportion of their budget from the tuition fees ranging from US$3000 to US$10 000 per year per student (Akduman et al. 2001). Moreover, although private universities with considerably greater financial resources will no doubt set some new trends and standards in the traditional Turkish higher education system (Akduman et al. 2001), there is still a common belief among general public that state universities are more successful and prestigious (Atakan and Eker 2007). Therefore even though having better educational resources, "young" private universities are still trying to prove their educational quality over the state universities, stay financially sustainable and compete with each other at the same time. And since state universities are free of charge and private universities demand a fairly good budget, students still prefer state universities over private ones. Therefore the challenge in terms of finance and competition for the private universities is fairly high.

## 2.4. A Pioneer: Istanbul Bilgi University

Istanbul Bilgi University (Bilgi) was established in 1996 by a group of young entrepreneurs and academics as a private, non-profit institution (Atakan and Eker 2007). But the founding foundation of the university, The Bilgi Education and Culture Foundation, was founded on 31 October 1994 which is still active and conducts activities in the fields of education and culture, and provide various scholarships to the students of Bilgi. The essential aim of the founders was to pioneer a fresh outlook on the Turkish higher education system (Atakan and Eker 2007). Therefore the principle of 'Non scholae, sed vitae discimus' (We do not learn for the school, but for life) was adopted as a core mission.

As a city university located in the heart of Istanbul, Bilgi now has three campuses including Dolapdere, Kustepe and Santral and is the only Turkish university that has a partnership with an international education network, Laureate International Universities. With its over 800 full and part-time academic staff members, six faculties, four institutes, four professional schools, seven programs associated with its vocational schools, and around 100 programs that provide education to its associate, Istanbul Bilgi University serves for its 11,000 registered students and has over 15,000 alumni (Bagcioglu Interview). 84% of the total outgoings are covered by income from tuition fees (Sokratis et al. 2011). Apart from being a self-financed ''foundation'' institution with no governmental contribution or corporate donations, Bilgi gives a total of 64000 million TL, approximately 26000 million €, as scholarships to its students in 2010-2011 academic year (Bagcioglu Interview).

As a Foundation University, Bilgi operates on a non-profit basis in the growing non-state higher education industry. In common with all Turkish universities, its autonomy is still considerably constrained by the regulatory practices put in place by YOK (Bagcioglu Interview). Despite of the extensive governmental control comparing to Europe and the States, and structural changes in the management, Bilgi still sticks to its core mission and continues to practice the social responsibility activities that gave the university a high visibility, good reputation and strong competitive advantage (Sokratis et al. 2011).

## 3. Methodology

In order to collect the primary data for the study two in-depth interviews were conducted. The interviewees were Secretary General, Cagri Bagcioglu and PRME Representative, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Serap Atakan. These semi-structured interviews lasted approximately an hour and were undertaken by the researchers themselves, who are affiliated with the university and one of them is also the UNGC Representative. In addition to these interviews, published institutional documents 'Undergraduate Student Handbook' and 'Sharing Information on Progress Report December 2010' as well as the web site of the university and non-published reports 'EUA: Istanbul Bilgi University', 'Evaluation Report', '2009 LIU CSR-Community Outreach Survey', 'Research Centers at Istanbul Bilgi University 2011' and 'Action Plan 2012' were used for the collection of secondary data.

## 4. Social Responsible Acts of Istanbul Bilgi University

Since its foundation in 1996, Bilgi has been a point of attraction for individuals who wish to discuss controversial issues. From the beginning, the university committed itself to the propagation of democratic values and human rights, to critical thought and to effective intervention in the social fabric of its multicultural environment (Sokratis et al. 2011).

Every year, on topics such as diversity, women rights, labor conditions, sustainability, corporate social responsibility, renewable energy, living conditions of immigrants and social local governance, Bilgi either organized conferences or hosted events (Atakan 2010). This ethos, epitomized by the controversial conference on 'Ottoman Armenians during the decline of the Empire', held at Bilgi in 2005, still prevails (Sokratis et al. 2011).

Moreover Bilgi, in line with its mission statement and its perceived perception, continues to create a cultural and scientific environment that has strong ties with every part of society. By giving % 4 of the income to research centers, units, social activities and researches Bilgi proves its support in such activities (Bagcioglu Interview). As of 2011, there are 14 research centers including The Social, Economic and Political Research Center (TESAR), Center for Migration Research, Intellectual Property Law Research Center, Human Rights Law Research Center, Center for Civil Society Studies, NGO Training and Research Center, Center for Environment, Energy and Sustainability Studies and four units including Children's Studies Unit and Youth Studies Unit (www.bilgi.edu.tr). These centers determine one half of Bilgi's social responsibility activities whereas the other half is conducted by the curricular activities, publications, conferences, and at the management level by the UN centered activities.

There are several social responsibility activities of these centers and units. The Social, Economic and Political Research Center (TESAR) is one of the most active centers of Bilgi. Since its foundation 1998, the center has been organizing free educational lessons given to the high school graduate youth of Dolapdere and Kustepe, the shantytown areas where two campuses are located. "*These lessons are made up of First Level English and Computing, Second Level English and Computer Accounting, Third Level English and Digital Photography and Fourth Level English. Lessons are conducted in the evening during the week at the campuses located in Kustepe and Dolapdere and there have been more than 6500 students participating in the program since November 1997 to 2009.*" (2009 LIU CSR-Community Outreach Survey) Another socially responsible act of the center is the Free Sports Schools. "*As part of the Free Sports Schools Project that was initiated a few years ago by the Turkish National Olympic Committee (TMOK), Bilgi opened its doors to the Kustepe Sports Complex on the weekends to the youth and children of Kustepe and provides training in volleyball, handball and basketball.*" (LIU CSR-Community Outreach Survey2009)

Center for Migration Research, established in 2005, is the first migration research center in Turkey to carry out large scale, multi-dimensional scientific researches. The center carried out several research projects and publications (www.bilgi.edu.tr). Some of the research projects of the Center for Migration Research include "Internal Migrations in Contemporary Turkey", "Belgian-Turks", "Literacy Acquisition in Schools in the Context of Migration and Multilingualism" (Research Centers at Istanbul Bilgi University 2011). The center also established a Community Center in Tarlabasi-Beyoglu, a close district to the university campus, and provides social and educational supportive activities for women, children and youth, who live under severe social discrimination and poverty in the city to which they have migrated (Atakan 2010). These people are the most vulnerable groups struggling with problems resulting from migration and poverty. The Community Center provides a place for the inhabitants of Tarlabasi, where they can attend activities, realize and develop their abilities, communication skills, strengthen their self-expression capacities

Center for Civil Society Studies, established in 2008, consists of three specialized and active unit, namely NGO Training and Research Unit, Youth Studies Unit and Children's Studies Unit (Research Centers at Istanbul Bilgi University 2011). The Center contributes to the civil society by means of conducting scientific research, training and vocational programs, publications and documentation of the social, economic and cultural development of the civil society (Research Centers at Istanbul Bilgi University 2011). One outstanding project of the Youth Studies Unit is the "Living Library" project organized jointly with Community Volunteers Foundation "TOG". The aim of the project is to raise awareness in the wider public about the importance of human rights for the personal well-being of all. This is done by encouraging citizens to think about their own human rights and those of the "other". The philosophy of this program contends that human rights cannot be defended by legal texts only they need to be protected and fostered by everyone. The Living Library serves as a tool to foster peaceful cohabitation and bring people closer together in mutual and careful respect for the human dignity of the individual. Another outstanding example of socially responsible act comes from the Children's Studies Unit. The unit developed a board game called "Children Have a Say" is developed for 10-15 age group aiming at the enhancement of children's knowledge on children's rights and their skills on linking their rights with their daily life experiences (Atakan 2010). The game has been printed in around 1000 copies and has been disseminated to teachers and NGO workers working with children all around Turkey.

The board game has reached more than 200 Institutions, 500 teachers and 5000 children since 2009 (www.bilgi.edu.tr). Human Rights Law Research Center is an active center in the pursuit of raising the awareness of, protecting and developing human rights law and humanitarian law both domestically and internationally (www.bilgi.edu.tr ). The center giving a special attention on anti-discrimination and has organized several training seminar on the subject. The research and working groups on "Prevention of discrimination and violence against women", "Health, medicine and human rights", "Social and criminological studies", "Refugee law" and "Judicial reform and access to justice" were also established by the Centre (Research Centers at Istanbul Bilgi University 2011). Center for Environment, Energy and Sustainability Studies aims to contribute to studies carried out in the field of the environment, taking into account all aspects of environmental problems, including energy and sustainability (Atakan 2010). Since its foundation 2011, the center started a research on "Public Preferences for Climate Change policy Instruments in Turkey", supported WWF Earth hour, activated paper saving within the university, started "Climate Finance and Carbon Market certificate program" and a voluntary educational program on increasing environmental awareness among house wives and primary school students (www.bilgi.edu.tr).

Besides the research centers, there are several courses designed around social responsibility subject and many courses include social responsibility slots or projects into their syllabuses. The Social Responsibility Project Course, open to all students from all faculties is an example of these courses. During the course, students develop and implement a sustainable social responsibility project experience diverse social circles, meet young people from other socio-economic status groups. Through discussions of current issues and development of projects, students promote human rights, social inclusion and nature conservation values (Undergraduate Handbook 2011-2012). Another example of social responsibility involvement is the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) observatory course. "*Observatory of the Public Relations Department of the Faculty of Communications, where students are encouraged to develop their ability to conduct research, identify industry trends and critically analyze projects in terms of their social responsibility concerns. While working towards creating a "CSR Almanac", the CSR observers share their findings with various social segments using different communication platforms"* (Atakan 2010). And business ethics course is another example that provides an understanding of ethical and social responsibility issues in contemporary business life. The aim is to enhance students' critical perspectives in implementing ethical behavior in organizations in relation to various stakeholders as well as the institutionalization of business ethics in the corporations (Undergraduate Handbook 2011-2012). During this course the students are presented real-life examples to identify the ethical issues confronted by the managers of Turkish and global companies, and learn the importance and the role of social responsibility activities of companies (Atakan Interview).

Other than the research centers and the courses, Bilgi has managed to become a well-known social responsible institution. Green Electricity Project is one reason of this good reputation. In 2009 Bilgi decided to use carbon and sulfur free wind energy and by 2010 January the University started to use wind energy that is supplied by the wind mills from the Aegean region of Turkey. With this new energy source the University not only reduced its carbon footprint but also did economic saving as well. By the usage of this environmentally friendly energy it is estimated that the university saved %25 of energy cost (Bagcioglu Interview). Additionally Bilgi is collecting all the wasted papers for recycling and donating them to a local health foundation which is using these papers as an income for free health services. Apart form these responsible actions, the university holds an ethics committee in order to evaluate the ethical dimensions of the academic research conducted on human- related subjects in terms of health, security, human rights, general law and ethical principles.

In accordance with its responsible management Bilgi is also very actively involved with UN centered initiatives. Since 2009, Bilgi has been committed both to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) initiative, its working group and to the Principles for Responsible Business Education (PRME) (www.bilgi.edu.tr). In 2011, first PRME report was prepared, following the report Bilgi received an invitation on behalf of Georg Kell, Executive Director of the UN Global Compact Office by Mitch Leventhal, Vice Chancellor for Global Affairs, State University of New York and Senior Advisor on Academic Affairs to the United Nations Global Compact Office. The invitation was a call to participate the Working Group on developing Guidelines for Academic Institutions in Implementing the Principles of the UN Global Compact. Bilgi is now actively taking part in the working group of UNGC in Higher Education initiative which will be launched in 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil (Atakan Interview).

In the meantime, the university has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with United Nations Development Program "Inclusive Markets Initiative", including a multi layered perspective to Poverty and Inclusive Market Studies that will be effective from 1st of January 2011 to 31st of December 2014. By signing this MOU with UNDP Turkey, Bilgi has undertaken the task of becoming a platform to discuss new business connections as well as new business models especially for those who are less fortunate. With the collaboration of UNDP and through this "MOU" activity, the best examples of social entrepreneurship in Turkey were investigated and documented (Atakan 2010). Although Bilgi has been very active in building a socially responsible higher education institution both in terms of curriculum and management, there is still more to come and management welcomes this ongoing commitment to strong community engagement (Bagcıoglu Interview). In near future Bilgi is planning to build environment friendly buildings, a facility for waste management, launch a new initiative that will focus on "peace studies", continue its active participation to UN centered activities and support the unique research centers that differentiates Bilgi in this competitive environment.

## 5. Conclusion

With the increased competition in higher education, the criteria on which institutions judged are changing. While what goes into judging a higher education institution might continue to change and evolve, the building blocks of success in any competitive environment remain constant such as developing a positive reputation and differentiating itself from the competition. Setting a corporate social responsibility strategy, and implementing the actions is one powerful way of achieving this goal. Most universities tend to focus only on teaching social responsibility in terms of corporate social responsibility initiatives and do not go beyond this by attempting to improve their communities (Atakan and Eker 2007). Yet in order to compete in the changing education industry and also to fulfill their mission in a world in perpetual transformation, higher education institutions must recognize that their own actions should reflect the values and norms which they claim to embody. This means deepening their commitment to CSR at the operational level as well as the academic level, mostly by curricular activities. This will not only be beneficial to the institution itself but also will be beneficial to the society in general.

As a self-financed foundation institution with no governmental contribution and 11,000 registered students and over 15,000 alumni, Bilgi is one of the outstanding universities of Turkey. And as indicated in the case, Bilgi can be stated as a success story in implementing CSR strategy and getting positive results from it. Obviously this success doesn't come by chance as it is earned. One of the findings of this study reveals that the internalization of the corporate social responsibility actions is an important matter in the success of gaining a good reputation and strong competitive advantage. In Bilgi case, this internalization starts with its mission and is set in its core business. Active centers, devoted academics, UN centered activities, rich curriculum developments comes eventually since the institution's values and activities motivate the staff. The motivation and willingness of the staff is another key in success since the actions can't come to life without the voluntary participation of the staff members. Another important finding of the study is the role of management's involvement and willingness in supporting and implementing social responsibility actions. In general management's involvement and interest is an important signal to faculty, staff, students, alumni, and other stakeholders that the institution's citizenship engagement is an operational priority.

For further research, studies aiming to measure CSR actions on reputation as well student choices and comparing higher education institutions on national and international level can be designed. In order to gain a better understanding of Bilgi's benefit regarding these actions can be measured among the staff, the students as well as the communities that Bilgi is engaged.

## 6. References

Akduman, I., Ozkale, L. and Ekinci, E (2001). Accreditation in Turkish Universities. *European Journal of Engineering Education* 26 (3), 231–239.

Atakan, M. G. S. and Eker, T. (2007). "Corporate Identity of a Socially Responsible University – A Case from the Turkish Higher Education Sector", *Journal of Business Ethics* 76, 55–68.

Atakan, S. (2011). "Sharing Information on Progress Report December 2010 http://ungc.bilgi.edu.tr/tr/prime.html. Retrieved: 10.09.2011

Atakan, S. (Program Coordinator of Business and Administration Department and PRME Representative of Istanbul Bilgi University). Interview. 12.09.2011

Bagcioglu, C. (Secretary General, Istanbul Bilgi University). Interview. 14.09.2011

Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management* 17(1), 99-120.

Carroll, A. B. (1979). A Three-Dimensional Conceptual Model of Corporate Performance. *Academy of Management Review* 4(4), 497–505.

Dill, D. D. (2003). Allowing the Market to Rule: The Case of the United States. *Higher Education Quarterly* 57 (2), 136-157.

Filho, J. M. de S., Wanderley, L. S. O., Gomez, C. P. and Farache, F. (2010). Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility Management for Competitive Advantage, *BAR - Brazilian Administration Review* 7 (3), 294-309.

Gioia, D. A. and Thomas, J. B. (1996). Institutional Identity, Image, and Issue Interpretation: Sensemaking during Strategic Change in Academia. Administrative Science Quarterly 41(3), 370–403.

Gray, E.R. and Balmer, J. M.T. (1998). Managing Image and Corporate Reputation. *Long Range Planning* 31 (5) 685-692.

Gumport, P. J. (2000). Academic Restructuring: Organizational Change and Institutional Imperatives. *Higher Education* 39, 67–91.

Husted, B. W. and Allen, D. B. (2001). Toward a Model of Corporate Social Strategy Formulation. *Proceedings of the Social Issues in Management Division at Academy of Management Conference,* Washington D.C., Washington, Estados Unidos, 61.

Husted, B. W. and Allen, D. B. (2000). Is It Ethical to Use Ethics as Strategy? *Journal of Business Ethics 27*, 21-31.

Maignan, I. (2001). Consumers' Perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibilities: A Cross-Cultural Comparison. *Journal of Business Ethics* 30, 57–72.

Melewar, T. C. and S. Akel (2005). The Role of Corporate Identity in the Higher Education Sector A Case Study. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 10(1), 41–57.

Mızıkacı, F. (2003). Quality Systems and Accreditation in Higher Education: an overview of Turkish higher education. *Quality in Higher Education* 9(1), 95-106.

Mohamad, B. , Bakar, H. A. and Rahman, N. A. A. (2007). Relationship Between Corporate Identity and Corporate Reputation: A Case of a Malaysian Higher Education Sector. *JURNAL MANAJEMEN PEMASARAN* 2 (2), 81-89.

Popa, O. (2010). Organizational Social Responsibility - State of The Art. *Revista Tinerilor Economisti (The Young Economists Journal)* 1 (15S), 59-68.

Porter, M. E. and Kramer, M. R. (2006). Strategy and Society: The Link between Competitive Advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility. *Harvard Business Review* December R0612D, 1-15.

Smith, A. D. (2007). Making the Case for the Competitive Advantage of Corporate Social Responsibility. *Business Strategy Series* 8 (3), 186-195.

Sokratis, K., Hyland, A., Timmermann, D., Bjerke, C. H. and Davies, H. (2011). Istanbul Bilgi University*:* Evaluation Report. *Institutional Evaluation Programme.*

Stensaker, B. (2007). The Relationship between Branding and Organizational Change. *Higher Education Management and Policy* 19 (1), 13-29.

Tansel, A. and N. D Gungor (2002). Brain Drain from Turkey: Survey Evidence of Student Non-return. *Career Development International* 8(2), 52–69.

UNESCO (1991). The Role of Higher Education in Society: Quality and Pertinence. *2nd UNESCO- Non-Governmental Organizations Collective Consultation on Higher Education.*
http://www.usc.es/ceta/recursos/documentos/role_higher_education.pdf.

Valentine, S. and Fleischman, G. (2008). Professional Ethical Standards, Corporate Social Responsibility, and the Perceived Role of Ethics and Social Responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics* 82, 657-666.

YOK (2010). Yuksek Ogretim Katalogu. http://www.yok.gov.tr/katalog/katalog2011/yok_devlet_2011.pdf. Retrieved: 10.09.2011