



A Digital Literacy Campaign as a Social Responsibility Project: A Case Study

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Abstract

In recent years, the number of Turkish corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects has risen significantly. These bodies help organizations to improve their image in the eyes of target audiences and provide great opportunity to differentiate from competitors. CSR projects usually take shape according to the needs of the sector or society in which an organization operates. The focal points of CSR projects in Turkey are usually centred upon education or increasing awareness around issues of societal concerns like public health and environmental and cultural protection. Compared to European countries, low literacy still remains a major issue in Turkey. Both private corporations and state entities support projects that aim to provide solutions to this problem. However, today we face another type of literacy handicap: That of digital literacy. This study focuses on the digital divide and digital literacy issues in Turkey and aims to highlight the necessity of organising CSR projects that address this educational shortcoming. The benefits of such projects are exhibited through the example of Beykoz Vocational School of Logistics' social responsibility project called "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" The project was conducted between October 2009 and October 2010 in Beykoz where the school is located.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Digital Divide, Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Reputation, Social Stakeholder

Introduction

The fact that corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects play an important role in creating a positive perception of organizations in the eyes of internal and external target audiences and in their differentiation from competitors is a commonly recognized reality today. The studies conducted demonstrate that consumers are influenced not only by the criteria of quality and cost in their choice for products and services, but also by the social responsibility efforts conducted by organizations offering those products and services. According to the 2013 results of GlobeScan, a Canada-based organization conducting studies in the fields of reputation management and measurement in 26 countries including Turkey, 35% of the global audience believe that organizations need to work towards creating a better society beyond merely conducting their business based on ethical values and recognized standards. The rate of those that say "Organizations should only focus on their business, making profits, paying taxes and creating employment" remains at 23% in the report. As for Turkey specifically, 58% of participants state that they only buy from companies that comply with ethical values and assume social responsibilities [24].

The effect of CSR on corporate reputation and brand value, regarded as a strategic value for companies, is a topic that attracts the attention of funders and investors in the merger and acquisition processes, as well. Today, social responsibility activities are handled as a separate headline in the scope of performance assessments conducted before investing in an organization [2]. In the past, the concept of social responsibility was perceived only as the performance of doing business in line with ethical standards and realizing efforts that are environmental/nature friendly; however, its meaning and scope became wider over time and it has come to be shaped according to the needs and problems of the community and/or sector of the particular organization. The majority of social responsibility efforts conducted in Turkey is composed of education and awareness-raising activities conducted in various fields.

Campaigns that target the problem of literacy [Ana-Kız Okuldayız (Mother-Daughter at School), Kardelenler (Snowdrops), Baba Beni Okula Gönder (Father, Send me to School), literacy courses for adults, etc.], which is still at a low level especially as compared to European countries, also supported by commercial organizations and conducted with success. However, another problem of literacy that has emerged as a result of today's technological advances appears to be related to digital literacy. Digital texts/applications require a different

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method of reading compared to standard texts. With general literacy, information is typically presented in a linear format that requires reading from the beginning to the end whereas information in digital environment information is presented in more of a semantic network in which multiple related sections of the text are connected to each other. The user needs to establish an association among the inter-connected sections within this entity of information [15].

The fact that computer technologies have become widespread in both business and daily life, and even obligatory for certain uses -like government e-applications- requires individuals to become digitally literate. The first step into digital literacy is the acquisition of basic technical and hardware knowledge related to computers. Following this step, the phenomenon of digital literacy assumes different dimensions such as access to information in the Internet world, the use and generation of information, as well as the identification of its reliability. This study aims to explore the problem of digital literacy at the basic level in Turkey, and to highlight the necessity of organizing CSR projects that address this educational problem. In that respect, the phenomenon of digital literacy will firstly be tackled on a conceptual level, the situation of literacy in Turkey will be explored and the CSR project titled "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" conducted in the academic year 2008-2009 by Beykoz Vocational School of Logistics will be explained in detail as a case study.

Digital Literacy

A review of the literature on digital literacy shows that several definitions about this phenomenon have been made and that these definitions are related to the concept of information literacy. In definitions of literacy, the overarching themes essentially include the use of information resources, using information in the processes of problem solving and decision-making. The first definition made in 1974 by Zurkowski purported to explain the concept by means of the qualities that an information-literate person needs to have. Accordingly, an information-literate person is someone who generates information-based solutions specifically for the problems encountered in the workplace and has the required skills and techniques to use the information resources in the best possible way [19].

The definitions made after Zurkowski until the 1980s preponderantly focused on the best use and control of the rapidly increasing amount of information, the new skills required and the economic as well as cultural changes caused by computer technologies, which were becoming widespread. According to definitions that are becoming wider in scope, an information-literate person is a person who performs research on information and technology, is productive in a democratic society, able to comply with a rapidly changing environment, prepares a better future for new generations, finds the proper information to solve personal and professional problems and is capable of using a computer [1]. In time, concepts such as efficiency in work life, quality of life, citizenship rights, democracy, technology, social integration and social acceptance also came to be associated with information literacy [19].

The inclusion of digital literacy as a separate definition took place in the second half of 1990s when digital technologies started to become widespread in every walk of life. Richard Lanham, attempted to explain digital literacy in his article published in 1995 in Scientific American by means of the multimedia properties of new media [20]. The most important reference pointing out to the definition is the book entitled Digital Literacy published in 1997 by Paul Gilster. According to Gilster, who explains this concept shortly as "being literate in the digital age", digital literacy is not limited to technical capabilities such as pressing the keys of a keyboard. It is also very important for the individual to be able to ascribe a meaning to what s/he sees on the screen, finds what s/he looks for and uses it in a competent way in practice. Gilster defines digital literacy as a special way of mindset and thinking far beyond effectively using digital resources [5]. The definition by Gilster that makes a reference to the lifestyle has become more prominent along with the developments that occurred in digital technologies. Computers and mobile phones are no longer used for a sole purpose. Acts related to all areas of life such as work, entertainment, communication, learning, education, socializing and shopping now take place by means of these technologies. Referring to this new feature of new technologies, Buckingham terms digital literacy as a cultural understanding [8]. Buckingham's definition shows us the reflection of every novelty occurring in information technologies onto the concept of digital literacy. In a way that is identical to information literacy, digital literacy concept also has an increasingly expanding scope.



The acquisition of cognitive and emotional skills in the use of digital technologies and the understanding of the nature of these technologies enable individuals to successfully implement living, learning and working methods required by a digital society. Being digitally literate has become important even in managing private life.

Although this concept is defined in various ways and the scope of definition is increasingly expanding, the first step of digital literacy is to learn the technical use of computer technologies and essential computer software programs. At this point, the situation is not different from traditional literacy processes. The traditional literacy process that starts with learning the alphabet continues with syllables, simple words, sentences and essential grammatical rules. An individual learning these can go up to higher levels if s/he continues her/his development: Learning new information, ascribing meaning to information and ensuring correct use and integrity of information in all fields of life. In the process that starts with primary school and continues to undergraduate (and graduate) studies, the individual acquires a foundation, then progresses by building every step on top of the previous one as s/he needs or desires. This also applies to digital literacy. After learning the essential computer hardware and software, one switches to the higher levels. Furthermore, s/he is able to use what s/he learned at the essential level in learning new software and hardware. The example tackled in this study encompasses the learning of essential steps in digital literacy and acquisition of skills required for an individual to survive in the digital world.

Today, versions of literacy that are specific to new media technologies and applications that emerge out of a combination of computer and information technologies are also mentioned: social media literacy, Internet literacy, network literacy, electronic literacy, etc. All these concepts are directly related to digital literacy because all these media emerged as a result of digital developments in the mentioned technologies. An individual who does not have the technical capabilities for using them cannot possibly access such media. Even if s/he has access, failure to know the language required by these media (commands on the screen, terms in the menu bar, etc.) again causes problems for the individual.

Necessity to Become Digitally Literate

In economic and commercial life, the integration of computer and Internet technologies in business processes have brought about new business models, methods and approaches. Having to comply with the technological changes in the changing global conditions, private enterprises and public institutions have not only given priority to candidates having computer and software skills in their recruitment processes, but they have also started to conduct on-the-job training so that existing workforces can keep up with these changes. The priority factor leading individuals to learn computer technologies in the first place was to increase their employability. This factor is still applicable today. According to the Workforce Market Trends Index Study, 80% of companies consider it necessary for employees to have computer certification when increasing their workforce [14]. In the report by Turkish Statistics Institute (TÜİK) entitled, "A Survey on the Use of Information Technologies in Enterprises - 2013", the rate of computer use at enterprises is stated as 92% [17].

This transformation that started in business processes has also taken part in the private lives of individuals. The fact that private and public institutions have shifted the services they offer to electronic media in order to increase efficiency, accelerate processes and reduce costs have required even individuals who are not in work life to use computer technologies. Several services are offered online today in both private and public sectors. Furthermore, the placement of applications online emerges as a requirement to be able to receive certain services. For example, if a teacher or a student who would like to receive an Istanbul card from IETT (Istanbul Electric Tram and Tunnel Company) does not apply through an educational institution (such a situation may emerge if the application deadline is missed) the only remaining options are online and by e-appointment (<http://skart.iett.gov.tr/>). A similar situation also occurs in the process of receiving healthcare services from state hospitals. Citizens who would like to benefit from healthcare services can only make an appointment at a state hospitals via phone and online systems. The line 182 to which patients are referred in order to make an appointment is hard to reach due to being busy, whereas the online appointment systems offer individuals an easier course of action. Even such a facility is an important factor in forcing individuals to use e-applications.



At the web site <https://www.turkiye.gov.tr>, the address for e-government applications and services, one can see that 380 services are provided online under the 43 administrative units (Presidential Office, Prime Ministry, Ministries, Head Departments, General Directorates, etc).

According to a measurement survey conducted among people above the age of 11 in 25 countries in relation to digital literacy, Turkey turned out to be the last country with 2.6 points. Necdet Ünüvar, Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission on Internet and Information Technology for the year 2012, expressed that it was necessary to have a mobilization towards digital literacy in his press release on the topic [27].

Along with this digital transformation that has changed individual, social and economic lives, a new concept of citizenship has been born: digital citizenship. The emergence of a such concept per se is the best summary of the requirement to become digitally literate. A digital citizen is an individual who is able to use digital tools as part of daily life, respects ethical rules and personality rights on a digital platform and knows how to use these tools with an awareness of safety and responsibility [12]. The qualities of a digital citizen are in line with the way of mindset and style of life recommended by Gilster in his definition of digital literacy [5].

The problem of digital literacy may occur not only at the level of using essential/basic computer technologies and programs, but it may also appear at advanced levels. A problem of digital literacy is mentioned even for individuals who are well-educated and are at senior positions in work life. The main reason behind this is the perception of these people as being deficient in some cognitive dimension. Since the developments in digital technologies have continuity, a digitally literate person should also continuously learn and develop herself/himself. The reflection of digital changes on private and work lives should be perceived in a cognitive dimension and should be able to be used in practice. A survey conducted by CA Technologies globally with 615 CIOs demonstrates that digital literacy is not adequate even at the level of board members. Marco Comastri, the President of CA Technologies, expresses that the deficiency of digital literacy at senior management levels of companies constitutes a barrier in the efficiency and growth of a company:

“The situation of inadequacy in digital literacy at senior professional management brings about failure to notice/realize emerging market developments, causes them to miss business and investment opportunities, a weak understanding of competitiveness and inability to respond timely to the market. Most often, management teams perceive the IT as a cost of doing business rather than seeing it as an asset to grow the organization, change the processes and provide the company with agility.” [9].

Digital Inequality: Digital Divide

The phrase 'digital divide' is generally used to express the inequality between those who have access to computer and Internet and those who do not [13]. However, this is a limited definition. There are different levels of inequality. The studies conducted in 1990s generally focused on the physical and basic access by population to computer technologies. The penetration and increase of the Internet use has caused the inclusion of those who have or do not have access to the Internet in the scope of studies. [18]. As online access has become widespread, differences between the various Internet use, potential and skills of individuals has also begun to take their place in studies on digital divide. In summary, physical access to computer, online access and Internet and computer use capabilities emerge as the main themes that are related to the digital divide.

According to the report dated 2004-2013 on Information Society Statistics by TÜİK (Statistics Institution of Turkey), the rate of Internet use in the population is only 49.9%. This means that 50% of the population still lacks access to information technologies in an era when we are going through an important digital transformation. According to the same report, the Internet access rate in households is 49.1% [7]. A significant part of the aforementioned access takes place in urban areas. According to the report dated 2013 on the 'Use of Information Technologies by Households', the use of computer and Internet is around 58%-59% in urban areas while this rate is 28.6%-29.5% in rural areas (<http://tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=13569>).

As can be seen, geographical differences come to the fore in digital literacy as is the case with traditional literacy. The educational level of individuals is also one of the determining factors in the digital gap. In the report by TÜİK, the rates of computer use sorted by educational status are provided. Accordingly, 3% of those who are not graduates of any school, 19% of primary school graduates, 61.3% of primary/secondary and



equivalent school graduates, 61.3% of high school and equivalent school graduates and 92.4% of faculty and higher education graduates are computer users.

A Case Study on the Problem of Digital Literacy

In this part of the study, the social responsibility project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to use Computers!" conducted by the Beykoz Vocational School of Logistics for the people living in the Beykoz district is explained in detail.

Purpose and Scope of the Case Analysis

The Beykoz Vocational School of Logistics implemented a social responsibility project titled "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" between October, 2009 and October, 2010 in order to contribute to the community that the school is in. The project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" is a good example of the requirements and positive results of contributing to the solution of the digital illiteracy problem at an organizational level - the core matter of this study.

The analysis of the aforementioned project is aimed at showing organizations in general the following positive results that they can be obtain by developing projects to contribute to the solution of digital illiteracy problem. The analysis aims to:

- i) demonstrate the opportunity such projects provide to establish positive relations with the target audience and social stakeholders,
- ii) provide organizations with ideas in the project design phase,
- iii) exhibit the weaknesses of the project in order to help organizations not to go through the same problems and help them develop more successful projects.

The project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" enabled BLMYO to access individuals from Beykoz who did not have the chance to receive education in the fields of essential software and hardware, to contribute to their personal development and to cooperate with the local government bodies in Beykoz to develop long-term relations. Thanks to this project, BLMYO managed to have its name recognized by the people in this district. In that respect, this project may also be considered a good example of opportunity management for organizations.

Selection of Analysis Units

After the idea of tackling the problem of digital illiteracy as part of corporate social responsibility emerged, the largest amount of data among the samples defined as a result of the preliminary study conducted was obtained through the campaign organized by BLMYO. Therefore, it was decided to use BLMYO as an example. Since BLMYO put the project into implementation between October, 2009 and October, 2011, only this period was taken into account.

Data Collection Method and Process

The data about the project were obtained by means of face-to-face interviews with the BLMYO Secretary General and Information Technologies Department employees, and through an examination of the web site prepared for the project and campaign-related news articles appeared in the local press.

In the initial phase, the Secretary General, who was also in charge during the implementation of the project was contacted; then a meeting was held with the employees of the Information Technologies Department who were actively working in the realization of the project at that time. At the meeting, the development of the project, its design and implementation were discussed, the official correspondence with the social stakeholders of the project, documents related to project such as activity reports of the school were obtained and examined as a part of the study.



Findings

Purpose of the Project

The Beykoz Vocational School of Logistics is the first higher education institution established in the area of Beykoz, Istanbul. As an institution of higher education, BLMYO has identified the development of mechanisms to enhance interaction with the society as its strategic objective and has adopted the principle of organizing activities in local and national levels towards this objective. The essential aim of the project was identified as contributing to the development of the people in the area. In the text of the protocol agreement signed with the local government, this objective is expressed in the following words: "To ensure that the inhabitants of Beykoz benefit from the planned and implemented training programs by Beykoz Vocational School of Logistics and to contribute to the development of those who are already at the age of learning and in working life through this method."

Project Stakeholders

The BLMYO directors decided to cooperate with the Beykoz District Governorate, Beykoz Municipality and Beykoz District Directorate for National Education for the project in order to ensure the recognition of the college in the area, to facilitate the acceptance of the college by the people in the area and to develop positive relationships with the local governmental bodies.

Beykoz Municipality took an important role in announcing the campaign to the locals in the area. The municipality not only provided the possibility to use its own open air advertising platforms free of charge, but it also served as the application address for those who wanted to attend this training program.

The posters and handouts prepared were hung in public spaces on the buildings of Beykoz District Governorate, Beykoz Municipality and Beykoz District Directorate for Education to be accessed by the target audience. A protocol agreement was signed in a signatory ceremony to which the press was also invited on October 12, 2009 among Beykoz District Governorate, Beykoz Municipality and Beykoz Provincial Directorate for Education and BLMYO.

Design Process of the Campaign

Planning

As explained before, the point of starting of the project was the question about how the School could contribute to its community as a higher education institution. During the meetings held in the institution, the types of problems for which the educational possibilities of BLMYO could be used was discussed and it was decided that the e-learning system prepared by BLMYO for its students could contribute to the computer education of the members of community.

Content of the Education: European Computer Driving License (ECDL) Training Program

ECDL is a training program that was formed in European Union countries in order to ensure the standardization of training and certification programs conducted in the field of computer technologies. ECDL has now become an international standard with global validity in computer education as a result of the efforts pursued by the European Union countries. Turkey, which engages in efforts as part of European Union harmonization, has also adopted this program in the process of raising human resources that are in line with the qualities of an information society as required by the e-Europe Action Plan. ECDL is one of the important building blocks of the project e-Europe. Aspiring to offer its students a world-class education, BMLYO took the decision to choose this program while creating its e-learning infrastructure.

In the project titled "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!", the ECDL Base Level Module was used. The technical team at BLMYO, members of faculty at Computer Programming and Applied English-Turkish Translation Program jointly conducted the process of localization of the modules into Turkish. The



voice-overs of the modules were commissioned by BLMYO and they were uploaded to the distant education system of BLMYO.

ECDL Educational Curriculum

The program is composed of seven modules comprising different themes.

(<http://www.teknoturk.org/docking/yazilar/tt000118-yazi.htm>, <http://ecd1.anadolu.edu.tr/mufredat.asp>)

- **Module 1: Essential Concepts in Information Technology (IT):** This module aims to ensure that the users receive information about the key concepts related to information technologies. The participant is introduced to the hardware and software that are combined to create personal computers. The topics of data storage, network and software applications, computer security as well as health effects, which are among IT concepts, are taught in this module, too.
- **Module 2: Computer Use and File Management:** This module is aimed to enable the users to equip with the ability to know the general features of personal computers and use the essential functions of the operating system, to effectively operate the desktop environment, adjust the settings, manage, copy, move and delete files, indexes and folders. Furthermore, the skills to use the simple setting tools and printer management tools along with the operating system are also covered in this module.
- **Module 3: Word Processing (MS Word):** This module covers the ability of the user to create, format and prepare to print a file using the word processor as well as the ability to use images and pictures in a document, create, copy and move standard tables and use the email merging tools in such a way as to benefit from these advanced features efficiently.
- **Module 4: Spreadsheets (MS Excel) :** This module covers the essential information on the concepts related to electronic tables and steps in the creation of electronic spreadsheets such as table formatting and use. The module aims to ensure successful completion of the following: formatting tables, changing their structures, adding and editing graphs and charts, using essential formulae and functions to perform mathematical and logical operations.
- **Module 5: Database System (MS Access):** This module that covers the essential database concepts and skills is divided into two sections. The first section encompasses the skills to use data packs to design a simple database and the second section covers the retrieval and query of information from a database, using selection and sorting tools as well as creating and changing reports.
- **Module 6: Presentation Preparation Software (MS PowerPoint):** This module encompasses essential functions such as creating, editing presentations, adding text, graphs, pictures and effects to the presentations, visually editing and modifying the presentations.
- **Module 7: Finding Information Online (Search engines, browsers):** This module enables the users to obtain information on the topics of Internet use and security. This module is also composed of two sections. The first section provides the user with the skills to use the essential web browser applications and search engine tools while the user learns the elements of Internet communication in the second section. The main themes in this section include e-mail communication, security considerations to be cautious about while using e-mail, attaching files in sending e-mails and creating files and folders in order to organize the e-mails.

Distant Education Infrastructure of BLMYO (2009)

During the period the project was implemented, the distant education infrastructure of BLMYO was located and managed on the 10Mbit fiber Internet connection provided by ULAKNET. The installation of ADOBE CONNECT, the distant education and e-learning platform was completed and the localized Turkish modules of CEDL were provided for users to access via the system. For the infrastructure of BLMYO, the programs Moodle, Adobe Presenter and Adobe E-Learning Suite were being used at that time. Moodle is used as the education management platform in online education activities while Adobe Presenter and Adobe E-Learning Suite programs are used for the generation of asynchronous course content for distant education.



Implementation Process

The implementation of project and certification of participants took place in six main steps:

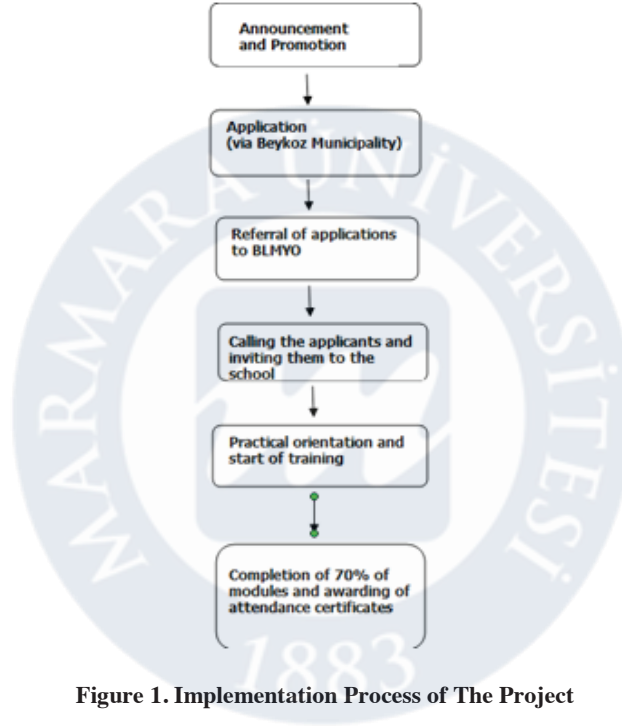


Figure 1. Implementation Process of The Project

Announcement and Promotion

The posters and handouts used to promote the project were prepared by BLMYO. The "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" became the motto of the project. The project was geared towards the people of Beykoz, therefore the announcement and promotion activities were held only within the borders of Beykoz district.

Three graphical materials were prepared: posters, handouts and banners. The posters were displayed for six weeks in the open-air platforms (billboards) belonging to Beykoz Municipality for six weeks and the handouts were placed at points where both employees of the institutions and citizens visiting these institutions could pick them up in municipality and district governorate buildings. In the handout, it was made clear that online education in the use of personal computers would be in line with international standards as well as the general computer applications would be provided for users as a part of the project to be jointly implemented by Beykoz Municipality, Beykoz District Directorate for National Education and Beykoz Vocational School of Logistics.

Banners were hung in the Beykoz district in places with high commercial and social activity in addition to population density. People who wanted to take part in the training were referred to Beykoz Municipality.

In addition to the printed promotional material, a micro-site was created where the project was explained in detail and users could access the system. On the main page of the site www.bbk.beykoz.edu.tr, four main links were included:

- Introduction to e-learning: A link enabling users registered for training to enter the system.



- Basic computer training: The section introducing the training program and training modules offered as part of the project.
- E-learning technologies: The section featuring the specifications of the infrastructure used in the education system.
- Contact: The section including the numbers to be contacted when necessary by the users, address of BLMYO and an e-mail link.

Furthermore, the project was also announced on the web sites of the district governorate, municipality and district directorate for national education and links were provided from the web sites of these institutions to the sites www.bbk.beykoz.edu.tr and the home page of BLMYO. The project was introduced to the local press via the press releases and the members of the local press, employees of the municipality and district governorate, headmasters of schools in the district and the people of Beykoz were invited to the signatory ceremony held in the conference hall of BLMYO on October 12, 2009. The protocol agreement outlining the conditions and limits of cooperation among the parties of the project was signed by the directors of BLMYO, the Beykoz District Governor, the Beykoz Mayor and District Director for National Education. The guests that attended the ceremony were provided with a presentation on the practical functioning of the education program.

Application and Participation Process

The participation of those willing to receive training in the project took place largely through the Beykoz Municipality. The individuals who wanted to take part in the project placed an application at the related department with their identity and contact information; when the number of applications was in the range of 30-40 persons, this department transferred these applications to BLMYO.

The public relations department of BLMYO contacted the applicants forwarded to them and invited them to a practical orientation training organized by the Information Technology Department of BLMYO. At the orientation program held in the computer laboratory of BLMYO, the system was introduced to the participants and they were shown how to enter the system themselves using the passwords and user names assigned to them.

Duration of the Training

Since the project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" was planned to be a one-year-long project initially, the users attending the training in the computer laboratory of BLMYO were informed that the system would be open until October, 2010 and that they could benefit from the training as they wished during this period. No limitations were placed on the duration of training for the participants apart from the end-date of October, 2010. The users could access the modules as they wished, complete modules in their own time and receive their certificates. The essential requirement to be able to receive an attendance certificate was set as the completion of 70% of the training. In the orientation trainings provided, it was stated specifically that the BLMYO Information Technologies Department would help the participants with all kinds of problems.

Project Deliveries

At the end of the one-year-long project, 136 participants were awarded attendance certificates. The modules were attended at a higher rate by the employees of Beykoz Municipality and Beykoz District Governorate; this group was also observed to have the highest rate of completion. The project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" provided the means for the development of positive relations between BLMYO, the first higher education institution in the area, and the local government bodies.



Assessment of the Case Analysis Results

The results of the case analysis of the project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" will be assessed under four main important elements: a) reputation management, the essential objective of public relations efforts, b) the concept of corporate social responsibility that is the essence of this study, c) the effect of social stakeholders that play a determining role in the success of CSR efforts and d) an assessment of the public relations process and sustainability.

Corporate Reputation Management

In the science of business administration, the assets of enterprises are divided into two: tangible assets and intangible assets. In periods when competition was not very heavy, the total value of an enterprise would be determined based on measurable tangible assets such as its financial worth, amount of raw materials, production and distribution technologies, number of employees, production and storage areas, whereas increasing competition brought intangible assets, such as corporate identity, culture and corporate reputation and knowledge, to the fore. Especially in 1990s, corporate reputation became one of the intangible assets that was highlighted and cherished the most. According to a survey conducted among senior level managers of companies operating in the UK in 1992, the answer received when the managers were asked about the most important intangible asset in the success of their organizations between the years 1987-1990 was reputation [29].

There are various definitions of corporate reputation; however, the common aspect of all definitions is that it is an ensemble of values ascribed to the enterprise by the target audience and social stakeholder and perceived in relation to the enterprise. Considering the article titled 'The Reputational Landscape' by Fombrun and Reil, who have an important role in the literature on corporate reputation, it is possible to see that the definitions employed in various disciplines at that period revolve around the 'ensemble of shared values perceived/attribution by the target audience(s) [16]. The definition made by Anca and Roderick demonstrates the relationship between the enterprise and its stakeholders in a more clear way. According to this definition, corporate reputation is a combination of the assessments about what the enterprise is, how the enterprise fulfils its responsibilities, how it meets the expectations of stakeholders and the global performance of the enterprise in complying with the social-political environment, which is formed in the long run [29].

The definition by Anca and Roderick also incorporates the qualities that indicate the way in which corporate reputation management is performed. The ways in which corporate responsibilities are fulfilled, stakeholder expectations are made and compliance with the environment is assured are part of the corporate reputation management. Corporate reputation management is a part of public relations efforts. According to the first definition on which consensus was achieved in the First Global Public Relations Congress held in Mexico City in 1978, public relations is an art and a social science according to which trends are analyzed, results are predicted, counseling is provided for organizational leaders and planned programs are implemented for the benefit of both the organization and the public [23].

All the activities performed as part of public relations are geared towards enhancing the reputation of the organization. In the results section of the survey conducted by Murray and White among CEOs in the UK, the association between public relations and reputation is summarized in these following phrases: "It is the role of public relations to ensure that the organization gets the credit for the good deeds it does" [22]. The efforts implemented enhance the reputation of the organization in the eyes of its target audience while confidence in the organization is also fostered. Being reputable is associated with being reliable. Reliability is the element that empowers organizations.

The project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" achieved what is desired for Beykoz Vocational School of Logistics with respect to organizational reputation management.



At the end of the first academic year, directors of BLMYO realized that they were not adequately recognized by the people of Beykoz whom they identified as the priority target audience when the school started taking students the first time. Increasing the level of recognition of the school in the area of Beykoz was required to ensure that it earned organizational reputation. To reverse the situation for the advantage of the vocational school, it was not deemed to be enough to merely advertise in the local press or to feature open-air advertisement platforms. An answer was sought for the question of how contributions could be made to the community by using the school's capabilities within the framework of a modern public relations mentality. The quest for a result that would be positive for all parties involved led to the project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" which could involve local governments and contribute to the developmental needs and current requirements of the local community. The cooperation with local governments raised the level of recognition of BLMYO by the local community and the fact that the name of the vocational school was mentioned alongside the trustworthy institutions in the area and that a solution was offered for a current problem also contributed to the perception of the school as a reliable institution.

The cooperation also contributed to the reputation of local government since they are also supposed to continuously develop positive relations with the local community. Those who wanted to receive training on computers yet were unable to realize this for various reasons developed the opinion that the municipality, district governorate and district directorate for national education were also working in their favor. The posters and handouts prepared were hung in public spaces on the buildings of Beykoz District Governorate, Beykoz Municipality and Beykoz District Directorate for Education to be accessed by the target audience, which reinforced this perception.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The essence of the concept of CSR is underlined by the approach that community and commercial organizations are not two entities that are far from each other; on the contrary, they complete each other [30].

While it was thought in the 1970s that the primary responsibility of enterprises was to make profits [4] in 1990s this opinion came to be replaced by the attitude that organizations also had responsibilities towards the community in which they operated. The concept of CSR was initially perceived as being merely about sensitivity to environmental problems; however, educational, social, cultural and economic subjects also started to be seen as part of CSR over time. Today, CSR is defined as "ethical" and "responsible" treatment of all stakeholders, internal and external, by an organization and as decisions being taken and implemented in this manner [2]. The CSR efforts contribute to the organizations being perceived as good corporate citizens. The allocation of some of the resources owned by organizations to efforts that contribute to the community in which they operate is the best way of showing the responsibility they assume towards their internal and external stakeholders [21]. The CSR efforts are shaped in accordance with the requirements and problems of the sector and/or community at stake.

The project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" has been a social responsibility project that contributed on a regional scale to the solution of the problem of digital illiteracy, which has become an increasingly more prominent problem in Turkey. The individuals that wish to improve themselves in computer use yet are unable to receive such training for various reasons, have seized the opportunity to overcome an important deficiency in their work and private lives thanks to the mentioned project. As can be seen in the section 'Limitations of the Study', the documents related to the project have been destroyed, hence, it was not possible to access the people that took part in the project as trainees. However, the employees of BLMYO who conducted the project mentioned positive results; for example: an acquaintance working at the municipality who completed the training with success was promoted as a result of this training.

Beykoz Vocational School of Logistics found the opportunity to use its e-learning infrastructure for the benefit of the community and to demonstrate in the best way its goodwill and responsibility for the society.



Management of Social Stakeholder Relations

Social stakeholders are one of the most important factors playing a role in the success of CSR efforts. In the definition of CSR made by the European Commission, the adoption of the principle of volunteerism by organizations in the solution of social and environmental concerns as well as cooperation with social stakeholders and integration with them are emphasized [10]. In the literature on the subject, the concept 'stakeholder' generally refers to all the parties with whom the enterprise is engaged, who are affected by the activities of the enterprise and who affect the enterprise with their activities [2], [28]. The basic premise of the theory of 'stakeholder' is as follows: the stronger the relations with the groups outside of the organization are, the easier it would be to achieve shared objectives [2].

Ali Saydam, who explores the concept of perception management and recounts what needs to be done to achieve this in his book Algılama Yönetimi (Perception Management), states that the first step to be taken in perception management is the identification of all the stakeholders to influence the business results and enable the achievement of business objectives [28]. A social stakeholder can be a group or an individual or it can also be identified as multiple social stakeholders. One of the important stakeholders of an organization is the local government of the community in which it operates. Based on an awareness of this fact, the decision was taken to act jointly with the Beykoz District Governorate, Beykoz Municipality and District Directorate for National Education as part of the project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!". This decision not only reinforced the perception of reliability for both the project and the vocational school, but also contributed to the development of long term and positive relations with the institutions that represented the local government. The cooperation that started with this project paved the way to work together on other projects, as well. The trainings that were developed as a result of the relationships of trust cultivated during the project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" include trainings on communication for the neighborhood headmen and self-employed people as well as trainings on personal development, time and stress management.

As mentioned before, the cooperation achieved also helped fostering the reputation of local governments in the eyes of the local community.

Public Relations Process and Sustainability

Public relations constitute a process. The commonly accepted model regarding the flow of the process is the four-stage model suggested by Cutlip and Center. According to this model, the process of public relations is composed of the stages of defining the problem/research, planning, implementation and evaluation [11]. Considering the project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!", it is seen that steps that were taken were in line with the first three stages. Firstly, the problem needs to be defined. Does the organization indeed have a public relations problem? If yes,

- i) can it be reduced?
- ii) can it be reversed to be in the advantage of the organization?
- iii) can a shared path be found to receive a positive result for everyone? [25].

The directors of BLMYO saw at the end of the first academic year that they were not adequately recognized by the people of Beykoz, whom they identified as the priority target audience and brainstormed about what could be done to solve this problem. They sought ways to contribute to the area by making use of the vocational school's own resources. The definition of problem and quest for a solution to be beneficial for everyone resulted in the project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!".

The first step, in which the problem was defined, was followed by the phases of planning and implementation. In the planning process of the project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!", the training program to be used, the way in which the system would be prepared for access, the way in which participants could apply, the functioning of the education process, the method for announcement and promotional activities as well as budgeting were planned.



The BLMYO officials expressed that the implementation phase was completed without any problems.

The last stage of the public relations process is the stage of evaluation. At the stage of evaluation summarized by Alaeddin Asna as "This is the stage where you see how you scored on a scale of 100" [3] the results obtained in the project are compared against the objectives set at the start of the project, measurements are made and the positive and negative situations encountered in the entire process are reviewed. The picture emerging at the stage of evaluation has a guiding character for the next public relations efforts. Therefore, the stage of evaluation in public relations is not seen as an end, but as the beginning of the next cycle. Evaluation and follow-up are handled together.

In the project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!", implemented by BLMYO, the first three stages of the public relations process were implemented successfully; however, the evaluation stage was seen to have some problems. The recording of data related to the project could not be completely assessed. Since the profile of the participants could not be created, it was not possible to identify those who benefited the most from the project; no surveys were implemented related to the training process, therefore, it could not be exactly identified whether the participants actually had any problems or not, their satisfaction levels could not be measured; a planned follow-up effort was not maintained; hence, it was not possible to identify the contribution that the training made to the lives of the participants (apart from the positive comments about a few acquaintances). The only data about evaluation and measurement were included in the activity report of the vocational school for the period of 2010-2011. In the report, it was stated that the mentioned project was implemented and that 136 participants were awarded attendance certificates. The fact that 136 persons were awarded attendance certificates as part of a district-based project can be accepted as an indication that the project received attention from the local community.

One of the highlights in the literature on CSR is the adoption of the approach of sustainability in relation to the understanding of social responsibility. With sustainability, emphasis is placed on the management of essential environmental and social problems. According to the definition made in 1980s Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway, who enjoyed wide acceptance, sustainable development is defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" [26]. The project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!", responded to a current need that would also affect the future lives of individuals. As stated in the part "Necessity to Become Digitally Literate" of the study, the fact that the use of computer technologies has become obligatory in today's business world, many institutions transferred their services to the electronic environment, e-government applications have become widespread has turned digital literacy into an important problem that needs to be solved. The project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!", contributed to the satisfaction of such a requirement that came to the agenda on a local level. Speaking at the signatory ceremony on 12, October, 2009, Ahmet Ergün, Beykoz District Governor, referred to the need that had been felt in the area and the contentment that they had with the solution that was offered: "We had shortcomings with regards computer literacy. The fact that this project was brought to our table while our commissions were conducting research and work on this topic proved to be a great opportunity for us. What was incumbent on us was to support it" [6].

The project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!", had the quality of generating a solution for a current need; however, the fact that the project was realized in only one year caused it to fall short in terms of contributing to sustainable development, which is targeted as part of CSR efforts. CSR efforts need to be sustainable. The answer to the question why the project was not repeated was that it was planned for only one year.

Limitations of the Study

After the development of the idea to tackle the issue of digital literacy as part of CSR, it proved difficult to find an example during the search performed to find a practical example. No detailed information could be obtained for the few examples that were found. The largest amount of data was obtained for the campaign organized by BLMYO. Therefore, it was decided to use BLMYO as an example.



However, it was not possible to access all the data related to the mentioned project implemented between October, 2009 and October, 2010. At the process of registration, the participants had filled in participation forms and sent their identity information, however, the documents sent by the participants for registration were destroyed in September, 2013 since three years had elapsed after the project and it was discontinued. The mentioned documents were not transferred to any databases, so it was not possible to define a user profile.

As for the promotional materials prepared for the project, only the handouts could be accessed.

The information on the project was compiled by means of the interviews held with the members of the project team who are currently actively working, the protocol agreement signed with local government bodies and news articles published in the press.

Conclusion and Assessment

As is the case for traditional literacy, the topic of digital literacy is also one of the topics that needs to be handled in the process of creating an advanced society. The effect of the global digital transformation on work and daily lives obliges individuals to become digitally literate. However, as with traditional literacy, equality of opportunity is an important problem for digital literacy.

The studies performed clearly demonstrate the problem of digital literacy in Turkey. Turkey ranked last with 2.6 points among 25 European countries based on the results of a digital literacy measurement study conducted among participants above the age of 11. After the result of the study was published, Necdet Ünüvar, Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission on Internet and Information Technologies, expressed in his press release that an action had to be taken for digital literacy [27].

Being digitally literate is a requirement in an information society. The organizations that conduct CSR projects for equality of opportunities to solve traditional literacy problems may make significant contributions to overcoming the digital gap that has emerged at various levels. Including digital literacy campaigns in CSR efforts would provide important contributions to being differentiated from competitors, to reinforcing reputations and to enabling organizations to develop positive relations with their community and social stakeholders.

The project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" is an important effort in the sense that it provided a solution for a current problem and it may constitute an example for several organizations. The mentioned project enabled BLMYO to reach its targeted objectives as a result of a successful CSR effort. Being recognized by the local community, reinforcing reputation in the eyes of the target audience and social stakeholders, laying the foundation for prospectively positive relations with the social stakeholders identified for the project and having the opportunity to show sensitivity towards the local community are important gains of this project.

The project "Everyone in Beykoz Will Learn to Use Computers!" is a good example in demonstrating that higher education institutions can easily contribute to the local community using their resources. Today, distant learning systems are available in several education institutions. These distant learning systems could be used to overcome the problem of digital illiteracy.

The project in this study was ineffective with regard to achieving sustainability. CSR efforts need to be continuous and sustainable. The efforts conducted in relation to a current topic with implications for the future, such as digital literacy, need to be planned not only for one year, but for longer periods.

Digital literacy should be seen not as an alternative to traditional literacy, but as its complementing element. Conducting more academic studies on the requirement for CSR efforts targeting the problem of digital illiteracy would attract the attention of business world to this matter and aid in the implementation of a higher number of solution-oriented projects.

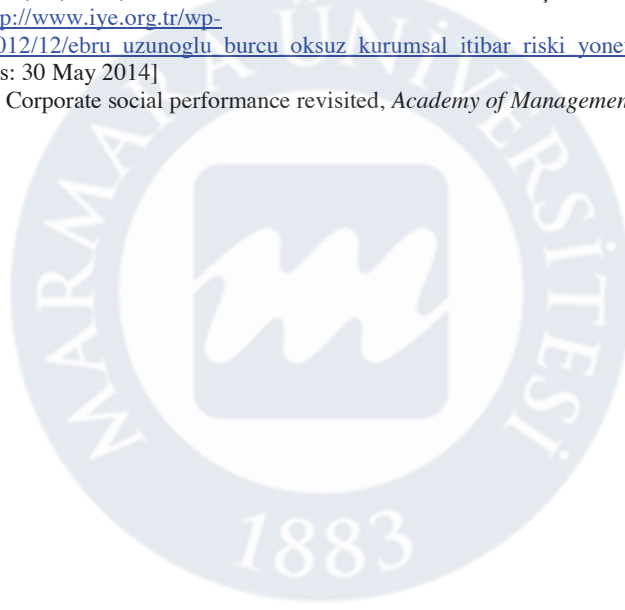


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