

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HUMANISTIC APPROACH IN CONSIDERATIONS ON THE UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Purpose: Capturing the added value for public universities resulting from adopting a humanistic approach in the implementation of the university social responsibility (USR).

Design/methodology/approach: The objectives will be achieved through desk research analysis. In this way, the previous approaches of the humanistic approach (HA) will be identified, which will then be creatively translated into benefits for the university arising from the implementation of individual elements of HA.

Findings: It seems that the humanistic approach not only aligns with the principles of the CSR concept but also closely reflects the foundations of university functioning. At the same time, there is a need for a precise model of the humanistic approach, which will aid in future practical implications, not only in the context of CSR but also USR.

Research limitations/implications: In the future, conducting research at universities would be valuable, allowing for the verification of the proposed benefits, as well as enabling an examination of the impact of the HA on university management.

Practical implications: Implementing the principles of the humanistic approach allows for the strengthening of the organizational personnel. Recognizing the human component also aligns with the formation of the university community, which should be the foundation of the institution.

Social implications: Adopting the principles of the humanistic approach will have a profound impact on the functioning of universities and their position in society, which will be strong only when the university is strong within its community.

Originality/value: This article, for the first time, systematically attempts to relate the humanistic approach to the university. This perspective will serve as a guide for university administrators as well as researchers dealing with issues of USR and HA.

Keywords: humanistic approach, humanistic reflection, university social responsibility.

Category of the paper: Conceptual paper.

1. Introduction

In considerations of the university social responsibility (USR), there is often a difficulty stemming from the lack of clear definition of the university's obligations in this regard, and consequently, the lack of clear benefits for the university resulting from the implementation of USR principles. This can be attributed to two fundamental reasons: there are various types of universities, making it difficult to establish general and specific principles for all institutions, and there are different forms of university funding, causing universities to operate under different conditions. Some differences in the implementation of social responsibility principles between public and private universities can be observed, such as the adopted quality assurance systems (Piasecka, 2015). Therefore, universities find themselves in a particularly challenging situation, having to independently seek USR principles suitable for them. In this context, a humanistic reflection seems like a reasonable direction for establishing the foundations of USR for institutions in which the community plays a significant role. Humanistic management suggests a return to the perception of organizations through the lens of the individual. In this perspective, the individual ceases to be treated as a one-dimensional existence that interprets reality solely through the prism of profits and material values necessary to satisfy their needs. An approach based on humanistic management principles is especially valuable in the context of the growing crisis of the humanities, which is gradually being marginalized in academic discourse. Humanistic management aligns with the concept of USR, and its application can become a tool for realizing the USR concept. Adopting a humanistic approach not only helps explain the approach to USR but also enables the identification of numerous benefits for universities. Therefore, the aim of this article is to capture the additional value for public universities resulting from adopting a humanistic approach in the implementation of USR.

2. Literature review

2.1. Humanistic approach

When seeking to understand the meaning of the humanistic approach (HA), it is essential to consider its origins. Specifically, it originates from psychology - from the humanistic theory, which recognizes that a person engages in activity when their needs are satisfied. In this assumption, human beings strive for self-realization and functioning in harmony with themselves (Kuhn, 2001; Maslow, 1968). The humanistic perspective in psychology poses the question: when and how do people experience a good life, well-being, and a sense of fulfillment (Acevedo, 2018; Robbins, 2008; Cooper, 2012; Davidson, 1992; Robbins, 2016; Waterman,

2013). This well-being of individuals translates into taking initiative and assuming responsibility.

The humanistic perspective has also been observed in the works of philosophers throughout various epochs. Humanism has been a subject of interest for philosophers like Aristotle, Kant, as well as Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Similarly, it is a subject of interest for researchers in the field of management (Pirson, 2013) and economics, where scholars contemplate the rationality of human behavior in light of the benefits achieved by individuals. This marks a shift in perspective, where people in organizations are not solely perceived based on their profitability and efficiency, as such an approach encroaches upon human dignity (Bartlett, Ghoshal, 1997).

The concept of humanistic management (HM) first appeared in 1967 (Lilienthal, 1967). In humanistic management, the key focus is on relying on people (WU, 2021). Some argue that the entire approach to management should be rethought, with a foundation in psychological insights rather than management theory (Ghoshal, 2005). This approach seeks to discover the human nature that translates into an individual's functioning within an organization (Pirson, 2013). Furthermore, psychological considerations strengthen the humanistic approach through research that directly contributes to our understanding of individuals within organizations (Pirson, 2017). The humanistic approach, however, requires further strengthening in the face of the dominant management paradigm based on efficiency, i.e., economic management (Kostera, Woźniak, 2021). It's worth noting the ongoing debate between the economic approach to management and the humanistic approach. Both approaches present different research perspectives and reveal distinct aspects of organizational management (Wychowaniec, 2016). Nonetheless, Barbara Kozuch emphasizes that there is no pure economic approach or pure humanistic approach; these two streams overlap, and a complete separation is impossible (Kozuch, 2010). Therefore, it seems that the choice between an economic or humanistic approach should be guided by the research goals one has in mind.

Humanistic management, much like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), relates to stakeholder theory, where an organization considers their expectations while also pursuing their own goals (Kessler, 2013). In a humanistic perspective on stakeholders, diversity and inclusion also play a significant role (Laszlo, 2019).

In the case of the humanistic approach, a fundamental challenge lies in grasping the essence of humanism to enable its practical implications. Nevertheless, it cannot be claimed that this concept has been precisely examined thus far (Arnaud, Wasieleski, 2014). Researchers also highlight the lack of clear guidelines on how to implement the humanistic approach in CSR (Melé, 2003; Pirson, 2020). However, attempts to do so can be seen, including the emergence of the concept of Humanistic Corporate Responsibility (CHR) in the literature. This concept adopts a humanistic approach within organizations with the aim of improving the well-being of employees in the organization (Koon, Fujimoto, 2023). Even in the field of management, discussions and dilemmas arise regarding the inclusion of humanistic elements (Maciąg, 2013;

Kuzior, Kettler, Rąb, 2022). However, it should be noted that most often, the principles derived from the humanistic approach are treated as tools for managing human resources (Lapina, 2021). Reflections can also be found in the literature concerning attempts to apply the humanistic approach to public administration (Romaniuk, 2019), which is particularly relevant in the context of public universities.

The key aspect of humanism is its focus on finding ways to fulfill human goals (Melé, 2016). Furthermore, the humanistic approach strongly emphasizes the respect for human dignity and human development, which leads to human flourishing (Melé, 2003; Melé, 2009; Dierksmeier, 2016; Pless et al., 2017). Viewing human behavior through the lens of dignity also allows for an understanding of human behavior in the workplace (Matheson, Dillon et al., 2021). As Melé points out, it's essential to perceive an "organization as a community of persons" (2011). In this sense, all employees form a community while having conditions for self-development and self-realization (Dillon, 2021; Spitzack, 2011). Both of these elements mutually support each other (Fremeaux, Michelson, 2017), so individual development contributes to organizational development, and vice versa. In humanistic management, well-being is of paramount importance, taking precedence over the production of goods or economic outcomes (Mirski, 2005). Other studies also point to the need to pay attention to ethical, cultural, relational, and personal factors as those that build a strong organization where employee turnover is not a problem (Kuzior, Kettler, Rąb, 2022). There is also an emphasis on adopting a broader view of management through the perspective of multiple stakeholders, making it possible to achieve goals like the Sustainable Development Goals (Pałasz, 2022).

In the article, the term "humanistic approach" (HA) is used, which allows for openness to the concepts of Humanistic Management (HM) and Humanistic Corporate Responsibility (CHR). It seems that HM is too limiting when it comes to University Social Responsibility (USR), and CHR primarily pertains to business entities, lacking sufficient evidence for its application in universities. Therefore, there is currently a lack of terminological consistency in the literature, which also affects the practical implications of these concepts. In this article, I propose adopting the concept of the "humanistic approach (HA)" in the context of universities.

2.2. University social responsibility

Issues of social responsibility are closely aligned with humanistic reflections, emphasizing the creation of a humanistic environment that underscores the importance of people (Arnaud, Wasieleski, 2014). Additionally, the humanistic approach aligns with the pursuit of sustainable development goals, which more systematically define the scope of organizational responsibility (Flores, Ahmed, Wagstaff, 2023). Much attention has been given to the analysis of CSR so far. However, some researchers point out that despite the theoretical emphasis on the significance of stakeholders in the CSR concept, the social aspect is often overlooked or marginalized in practical implementations (Armstrong, Green, 2014). This may be due to an excessive focus on

quantifiable results in socially responsible actions, which is not always feasible in social initiatives.

The issue of University Social Responsibility can be considered in three areas of tasks carried out by the university: within its research, educational, and social mission (Leja, 2019). In the context of humanistic considerations, a significant amount of attention is dedicated to the workforce. However, when it comes to a university, this reflection should be broader and encompass all its missions. Therefore, the identification of stakeholders should also be based on the three missions of the university.

Within the research mission, the utmost attention should be given to employees. Caring for the internal potential of the organization forms the basis for building social responsibility (Carroll, 1991). In this area of university tasks, it seems that the principles derived from humanism can be readily applied to actions directed towards employees, as previous attempts to implement the humanistic approach have focused on human capital management.

In the case of the educational mission, special attention should be directed toward students. M. Nussbaum emphasizes the importance of humanistic education, seeing it as a means to develop critical thinking, the courage to express one's opinion, empathy, and a broad worldview (2016). Education of future managers is of particular significance, where themes related to responsibility and humanism will influence their future decisions (Deets, Rodgers, Erzurumlu, Nersessian, 2020). There is also a focus on responsible education that will help graduates adapt to a dynamic job market. It is proposed to impart competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving skills, adaptability to change, and a willingness to learn throughout life (Sztompka, 2014).

In the context of USR, the third mission - the social mission, has played a significant role. Within this mission, a crucial aspect has been the perspective on external stakeholders of the university and the relationships built with them. In general terms, the third mission involves activities aimed at the social environment and collaboration with external entities, including businesses, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, and more (Banaś, Czech, Kołaczek, 2019). This mission extends beyond the scope of the first two missions, which are related to scientific research and education (Zomer, 2011). It is important to emphasize its impact on all of the university's missions (Pinheiro, Langa, Pausits, 2015).

When seeking opportunities to apply the HA to fulfill the principles of USR, the focus should be on all stakeholders of the university resulting from the fulfillment of its mission. In a general sense, this includes employees, students, and all external stakeholders. While in profit-oriented organizations, actions guided by a humanistic approach directed towards employees and external parties can be identified, universities have a specific internal stakeholder, which is students. Students are a crucial part of the university for several years, making the implementation of HA within the university context a unique challenge that requires careful consideration.

3. Materials and methods

In the article, the author utilized desk research to explore secondary sources addressing the analyzed issues. The starting point for the analysis is the delineation of the principles of the humanistic approach. Comparing these principles allows for further reflection on the benefits that an organization can achieve through their implementation. In the subsequent part of the article, various humanistic approaches were presented in chronological order. Nine approaches were detailed, using terminology related to Humanistic Management (HM), the humanistic paradigm, humanism, Corporate Humanism Responsibility (CHR), Human Resource Management (HRM), and others that draw attention to the humanistic approach to the principles within an organization.

In the HM concept, the following key principles were outlined (Kimakowitz, Pirson et al., 2011):

1. dignity of each person,
2. ethical decision-making,
3. seeking normative legitimacy.

The milestones of the humanistic paradigm (Pirson, 2013) have been formulated as follows:

1. central focus on human dignity,
2. well-being as end in itself not mean means to performance.

The article also mentions four principles of Humanistic Management (Kessler, 2013):

1. Recognition of the "human factor" – individuals in the organization are treated as subjects, not just tools for achieving the organization's tasks. The development and aspirations of individual employees are considered important.
2. Acknowledgment of diversity – this applies to age, gender, ethnic background, religion, and more. In the humanistic approach, respecting diversity pertains not only to employees but to all stakeholders of the organization.
3. Balancing individual goals with organizational goals – job satisfaction and empathy are valued equally alongside the organization's objectives.
4. Promoting ethical attitudes among all stakeholders – popularizing ethical codes, providing training in this area, and treating the organization as a responsible citizen.

Another approach, the humanist conception of the ontology of human being (Arnaud, Wasieleski, 2014), lists four key principles: freedom and self-determination, moral autonomy, along with dignity and equality among people, the need for social integration while recognizing the uniqueness and individuality of each person, and the final principle is a concern for the common good.

In the classification of the Three-Stepped Approach to Humanistic Management (Kimakowitz, 2016), the following factors are considered:

1. respect for human dignity,
2. ethics in managerial decisions,
3. stakeholder engagement.

A more detailed expansion of the principles of humanism is presented by Melé, highlighting seven important principles of such an approach (2016):

1. viewing a person as a whole,
2. emphasizing the diversity of individuals,
3. respecting human dignity,
4. perceiving individuals as beings striving for development,
5. fostering individual and communal development,
6. promoting harmony between humans and nature,
7. recognizing people as transcendent beings.

In another classification, attention is drawn to the foundational values of the humanistic approach (Kabadayi, Alkire et al., 2019), which include respect, trust, fairness, and inclusion.

Based on the humanistic approach from 2013 by Arnaud and Wasieleski, as well as the classifications by Melé from 2012 and 2016, a classification of elements of Corporate Humanistic Responsibility (CHR) was developed, consisting of six elements (Koon, Fujimoto, 2023):

1. participation,
2. development,
3. mutual respect with superiors,
4. self-determination,
5. mentoring and coaching,
6. fairness.

It's worth noting that this classification is relatively broad, setting it apart from others. The fact that it was developed based on previous considerations within the realm of humanism suggests a progression in conceptualization. Within each of the individual elements, the authors also make references to earlier humanistic perspectives, indicating a connection to the evolving understanding of humanism in organizational contexts. This demonstrates an ongoing development of humanistic principles and their application within organizations.

It's important to note the concept of HRM, which distinguishes two key approaches to social responsibility towards employees. The first approach is quantitative in nature, focusing on aspects like wage increases and job creation. The second approach is qualitative, prioritizing elements such as workplace friendliness, collaboration, individualized approaches to employees, and the overall comfort of the work environment (Zavyalova, Volokhina, 2023). These two approaches reflect the different ways in which organizations can demonstrate their responsibility towards their workforce.

Research conducted by Yelena Kovalenko (2020) provides insights into the humanistic approach, leading to the following conclusions:

1. A humanistic management culture emphasizes that individuals should not be treated as mere tools to achieve goals. People in an organization strive to satisfy not only their material needs but also their moral needs.
2. The humanistic approach places the individual at its core, which also affects communication. Strict rules and principles alone are insufficient for effective communication; individualized approaches to people in the organization are needed.
3. Management democratization that takes into account employees' opinions, considers the interests of various stakeholders, and acknowledges emotional factors is important.
4. It is based on humanistic behaviorism, taking into account natural human states and recognizing cause-and-effect relationships between external stimuli and human behaviors.
5. Motivators for self-realization in the workplace include the work itself, success, career advancement, development opportunities, and responsibility.

The classifications presented indicate the diversity of humanistic elements. This confirms the need for greater systematization, which will contribute to better practical outcomes.

4. Analysis and results

Comparing the existing humanistic approaches allows for the identification of key benefits that a university can achieve through a humanistic approach to organization. Different humanistic approaches have been compared to extract the core principles of this concept. The principles resulting from all the classifications were extracted and assigned weights corresponding to the number of mentions in each classification. The identified principles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Principles of the humanistic approach

The humanistic approach	
Principle	Weight
Human dignity	9
Diversity	4
Self-Realization	4
Organizational development/common good	4
Integration	3
Ethics	3
Holistic view of human	2
Participation	2
Autonomy	2

Cont. table 1.

Equality/justice among people	2
Well-being	1
Harmony between human and nature	1
Respect for human spirituality	1
Coaching and mentoring	1
Honesty	1
Trust	1

Source: Own elaboration based on the cited literature.

The presented compilation indicates that the most significant principle among all is the respect for human dignity. This principle emerged in all classifications. This is due to the fact that human dignity serves as the cornerstone of the humanistic approach. In the second place, with a considerably smaller number of mentions (4), are: diversity, self-realization, and organizational development/common good. Notably, self-development and organizational development achieved the same result, signifying the importance of maintaining balance to avoid unidirectional thinking. Subsequent principles received fewer mentions, but this does not diminish their significance; it merely reflects a lower consistency among various concepts associated with the humanistic approach in this regard. Nonetheless, identifying them has resulted in a comprehensive set of principles, which will be useful in formulating the benefits arising from the humanistic approach.

In the subsequent part, the outlined principles of the humanistic approach were applied to the realm of University Social Responsibility (USR). Each individual principle was interpreted within the context of the university's specific missions and the responsibilities that arise from them. This is presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

The humanistic approach in the context of University Social Responsibility (USR)

Research Mission	Educational Mission	Social Mission
Human dignity - in relation to university staff.	Human dignity - towards students.	Human dignity - towards all stakeholders.
Diversity - respecting diversity among employees, as well as acknowledging diverse approaches in teaching, research, and across disciplines.	Diversity - respecting diversity among changing generations of students.	Diversity - respecting diversity of opinions, comments, and societal demands.
Self-Realization - providing conditions for the development of employees.	Self-Realization - supporting students in their personal development.	-
Organizational development/common good – caring for the development of the organization and the common good represented by the university among all stakeholders.		
Integration – multidimensional integration, both internally and externally, taking into account external stakeholders.		
Ethics – the fundamental principle governing the academic community's functioning within the organization as well as its collaboration with external stakeholders.		
Holistic view of human – the need to recognize the emotions and needs of others, accepting their states resulting from external stimuli.		

Cont. table 2.

Participation – employee participation in decision-making.	Participation – taking into account the voice of students in making decisions regarding the university.	Participation – engaging in dialogue with external stakeholders, considering the input of advisory bodies and local communities.
Autonomy – respecting the autonomy of the university and its employees.	Autonomy – respecting the autonomy of the students.	Autonomy – respecting the distinctiveness of external stakeholders.
Equality/justice among people – fair treatment of employees, equality of working conditions and compensation.	Equality/justice among people – fair assessment, equal treatment of all students.	Equality/justice among people – applied towards external stakeholders.
Well-being – respect for the well-being of employees, understanding their needs in the workplace and beyond.	Well-being – respect for the well-being of students, understanding that education is important but just one of many areas in a young person's life.	-
Harmony between human and nature – respect for the natural environment applies to all individuals and entities out of the recognition that we all benefit from it.		
Respect for human spirituality – respect for beliefs and convictions of individuals.		
Mentoring – an academic teacher should serve as a role model for students, sharing knowledge and experiences among colleagues.	Mentoring – students should feel the support of their teachers, to whom they can turn with difficulties and questions.	-
Honesty – a fundamental principle governing the functioning of the academic community, both within the organization and in cooperation with external stakeholders.		
Trust – a fundamental principle governing the functioning of the academic community, applicable within the organization as well as in collaboration with external stakeholders.		

Source: Own elaboration.

The interpretations of the humanistic approach principles in the context of University Social Responsibility (USR), as presented in the table, indicate that all of these principles find their application within the university environment. Therefore, it is justified to explore the benefits for the university resulting from adopting each of these principles. Table 3 presents the benefits derived from embracing the principles of the humanistic approach by the university.

Table 3.

Benefits for the university resulting from adopting the humanistic approach

The humanistic approach	
Principle	Benefits
Human dignity	Greater employee loyalty, positive student perception leading to successful recruitment outcomes for the university.
Diversity	Utilization of diversity potential within the organization, exchange of knowledge and perspectives.
Self-Realization	Allowing individual members of the community to develop enables the growth of the organization.
Organizational development/common good	Development of an entrepreneurial orientation manifested in initiating new solutions.
Integration	Building a strong community ready to defend their university and accepting challenging moments.
Ethics	Comfortable collaboration with university stakeholders, allowing for a sense of security.
Holistic view of human	Understanding decisions made by employees, recognizing the potential of each employee.

Participation	Gaining interesting ideas and solutions that align with the expectations of the community members.
Autonomy	Freedom, allowing for creativity and freedom of thought, translating into the academic development of staff and students.
Equality/justice among people	A sense of justice enabling collaboration among community members and reducing competition.
Well-being	Satisfaction with membership in the academic community.
Harmony between human and nature	Implementing environmental policies related to sustainable development and ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance).
Respect for human spirituality	A fulfilled employee expressing their needs and openly discussing the values that accompany them without hesitation.
Coaching and mentoring	Accumulation and dissemination of knowledge, learning within the university.
Honesty	Comfortable collaboration with university stakeholders, allowing for a sense of security.
Trust	Comfortable cooperation with university stakeholders, allowing for a sense of security.

Source: Own elaboration.

The perspective of benefits sheds new light on the humanistic approach, which ceases to be merely an idealistic postulate. Recognizing how much a university can gain by adopting this new approach proves that it is not just another concept with no practical implications. It's also important to note that this list of benefits is open-ended. The identified benefits stem from existing interpretations of the humanistic approach. Importantly, none of these interpretations were directly tailored for universities. Therefore, a more in-depth approach to formulating the humanistic approach specifically for universities could potentially reveal additional benefits.

5. Discussion and conclusions

It seems that the humanistic approach not only aligns well with the principles of the CSR concept but also deeply resonates with the foundational aspects of how a university functions. At the same time, there is a need for a precise model of humanistic management that can provide practical implications in the future. Particularly important is to consider the organizational context. While a substantial amount of literature focuses on businesses, there is much less attention given to the issues related to organizational approach within the context of a university.

Indeed, despite the popularity of the USR concept, universities often lack the tools and justification to implement its principles effectively. Perhaps, to enhance efforts in the realm of USR, it's necessary to bolster the language of benefits, which would resonate more with university administrators. A similar approach was employed in the initial stages of implementing CSR and it appears to have brought about significant changes in that domain.

Perhaps in the future, it would be worth considering the addition of humanistic approach principles that have not yet appeared in any classification but are relevant to the specific nature of an institution like a university. This way, it could also be possible to enhance the benefits for the university that stem from adopting the humanistic approach.

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