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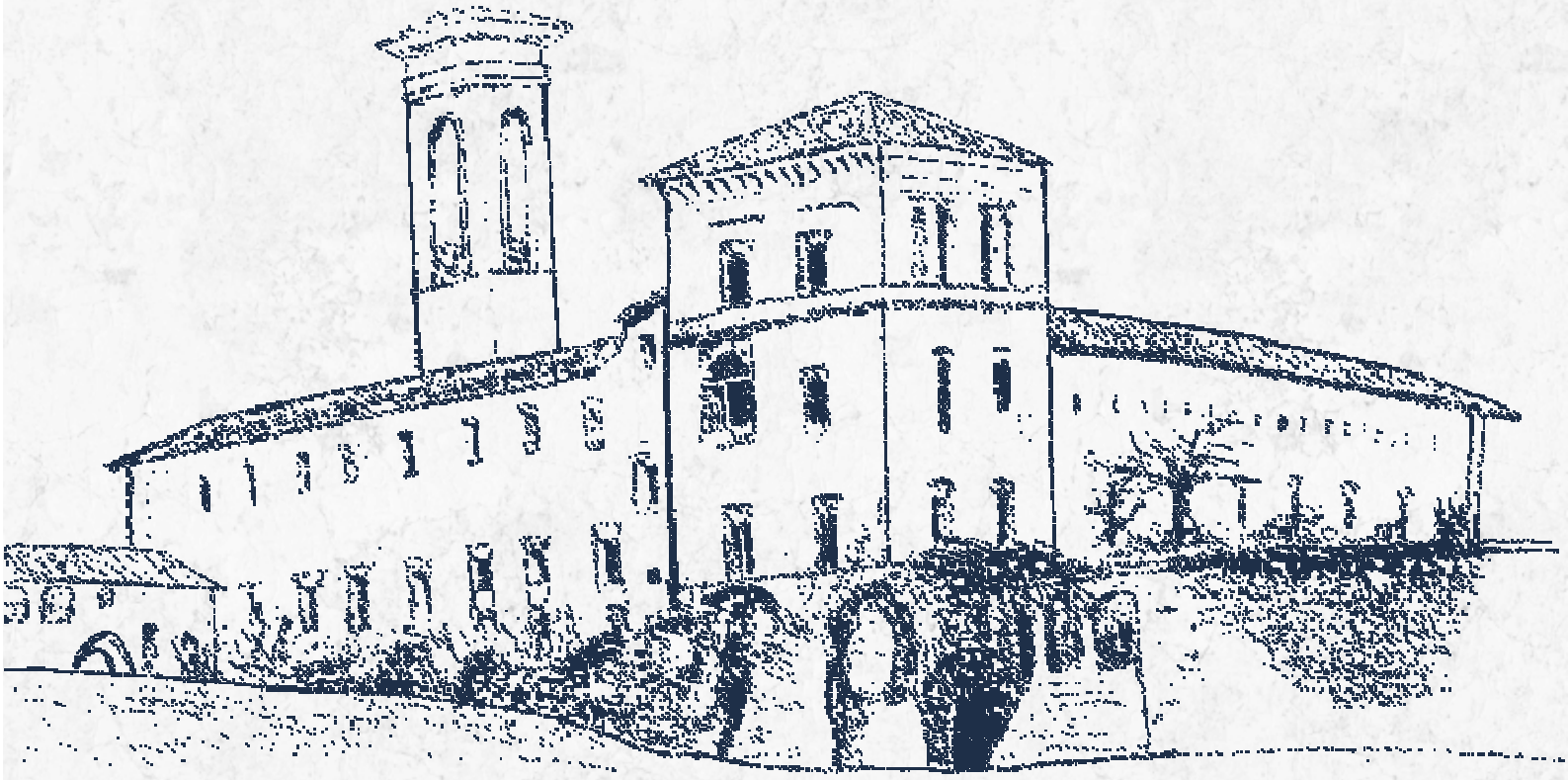

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A Curriculum Framework for the Professional Development of Corporate Social Responsibility Practitioners in South Africa

Christopher P.A. McCreanor and Elias M. Bitzer [1]

Abstract. This paper explores the proposed curriculum framework for the professional development of entry to mid-career CSR practitioners in South Africa and discusses the critical competencies required to be a successful CSR practitioner in an emerging market. It claims to be the first validated curriculum and critical competency framework for the professional development of CSR practitioners within South Africa and thus is a valuable resource and guideline for curriculum designers and policy makers when considering the design, development and implementation of a CSR programme or qualification in similar emerging economies.

Keywords: *Curriculum Framework, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Practitioners, Professional Development, Mixed-Method, Competence.*

[1] Christopher McCreanor (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University). Email address: christopher@hybrilearn.co.za. Elias M. Bitzer (Stellenbosch University). Email address: EMB2@sun.ac.za.

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1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility or corporate social investment (otherwise known as CSI in South Africa) encourages a vision of business responsibility and accountability that goes beyond shareholders and investors to include key stakeholders. Corporations in South Africa find themselves in a unique position to contribute to social innovation and transformation through strategic corporate social responsibility strategies. Businesses are seen as catalysts for social transformation, and corporate social practitioners in South Africa are viewed as the change agents responsible for managing the social projects that help advance the communities in which they operate.
This is a responsibility that is taken seriously. However, relevant literature on corporate social responsibility indicates that industry thought leaders have been aware of and acknowledge that there is a critical skills deficit in the corporate social responsibility sector. The corporate social responsibility sector is often criticised as a disordered poverty photography project environment with dismal reporting standards and even lower standards for measuring the longitudinal impact of projects aimed at social change and upliftment. The inquiry explored the identification and validation of core competencies for CSR practitioners. In particular, it aimed to develop a curriculum framework for the professional development of CSR practitioners in South Africa.

1.1 Defining CSR in the South African Context

CSR is a difficult concept to synthesise[2] and may be interpreted in different ways by different people depending on the internal or external scope of CSR, and may even be subject to their personal belief system closest to the cause or organisational context of CSR[3,4,5]. The personal

[2] J. Moon, Government as a driver of corporate social responsibility: The UK in comparative perspective, Paper presented at International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility, Nottingham University Business School, Nottingham, United Kingdom, 2004

[3] N. Katabadse, C. Rozuel, L. Lee-Davies, Corporate social responsibility and stakeholder approach: A conceptual review, in International Journal of Business Governance and Ethics, 2005, vol 1, n. 4, 227-302

[4] D. Crowther, L. Rayman-Bacchus, Perspectives in Corporate Social Responsibility, in N. Capaldi (ed.), The Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001, 140-160

belief system of individuals will in turn be influenced by the belief systems of the society in which they live. The contextualisation of CSR in its broadest sense may be impossible within the South African context without examining a number of definitions within the North American, European and broader African context. South African contextualisation may be unique in itself, but has been influenced by global definitions from a business, academic and practitioner perspective[6]. According to Werther and Chandler[7], CSR practitioners and companies should not look for universal definitions, but should instead build their strategies around the perspectives of their shareholders and key stakeholders[8].

It is clear that defining CSR is critical for the development of the CSR practitioner. For the purpose of this study, the definition of the Institute of Directors in Southern Africa (IoDSA) was used as a guideline to explore the development of context-focused corporate social responsibility. It is a critical component of the broader notion of corporate citizenship:

> One is a good corporate citizen, inter alia, by being socially responsible. Corporate responsibility is the responsibility of the company for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour that: contributes to sustainable development, including health and the welfare of society; takes into account the legitimate interests and expectations of stakeholders; is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour; and is integrated throughout the company and practiced in its relationships. Activities include products, services, and processes. Relationships refer to a company's activities within its sphere of influence[9].

[5] S. Idowu, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in S. Idowu, W. Filho, (ed.), Global Practices of Corporate Social Responsibility, London, Springer, 2009, 239-254

[6] S. Ponte, S. Roberts, L. van Sittert, Black Economic Empowerment': Business and the State in South Africa, in Development & Change, 2007, vol 38, n.5, 933-955.

[7] W. Werther, D. Chandler, Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility: Stakeholders in a Global Environment, SAGE Publications, 2010

[8] W. Jackson III, T. Alessandri, S.Black, The Price of Corporate Social Responsibility: The Case of Black Economic Empowerment Transactions in South Africa, Paper presented at. Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Atlanta, United States, 2005

[9] Institute of Directors in Southern Africa (IoDSA), King Report on Governance for South Africa 2009. Cape Town, 2010

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CSR practitioners may therefore use this definition published by IoDSA in the King Report on Governance in South Africa as a foundation to define CSR within their specific industries and corporative contexts.

Moving away from a personal belief system, it becomes clear from an institutional perspective that South African definitions, context and dimensions of CSR have been significantly influenced by a legacy of colonialism and apartheid, with big corporates having been drawn into this history in both undesirable and constructive ways. Visser supported this statement, pointing to ample examples over the last millennium of social injustice and political corruption involving corporates. Africa, and South Africa in particular, has seen some of the worst-case examples of ecological destruction, unfair labour practices and social disruption[10]. Visser further argued that there is abundant evidence of the positive role business has played, not only in bringing capital investment to (South) Africa, but also in facilitating skills transfers, knowledge sharing and "social responsibility programmes"[11].

South Africa's approach to CSR has been influenced and subjugated by business strategies generally referred to as corporate social investment (CSI). This unique South African phenomenon focuses on creating a positive corporate image between stakeholders and business. Fig (2005) added that business in South Africa generally "eschews the notion of corporate social responsibility despite the wide use of this term among practitioners and in the literature" and "favours concepts of 'corporate social investment' and 'corporate citizenship': concepts that ask no questions about legacy, memory, history, justice, or moral and ethical responsibilities"[12]. Fig's observation is key to understanding the concept of CSI in the South African context as key role-players and stakeholders use the term CSI instead of CSR. Babarinde supported Fig's argument and postulated that a healthier business environment and society bodes well for economic action with regard to long-term business interests and that it is therefore not surprising that CSR conventionally means CSI in the South African context[13].

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[10] W. Visser, Revisiting Carroll's CSR Pyramid: An African Perspective, in: E. Pedersen, M. Huniche, (ed.), Corporate Citizenship in Developing Countries; New Partnership Perspectives, Narayana Press, Denmark, 2006

[11] *W. Visser op.cit*

[12] D. Fig, Manufacturing amnesia: Corporate Social Responsibility in South Africa, in International Affairs, 2005, vol. 81, n. 3, 599-617

[13] O. Babarinde, Bridging the economic divide in the Republic of South Africa: A corporate social responsibility perspective, in Thunderbird International Business Review, 2009, vol. 51, 355-368

1.2 CSR versus CSI in South Africa

It is clear that CSR is a principled and values-based framework, which integrates all facets of business processes and procedures. CSR thus implies those activities within business operations related to ethical and socially responsible conduct, and includes an organisation's contribution to sustainable development. CSR focuses on how the business or organisation contributes to building human, social and natural capital through its core business activities. CSI, in contrast to CSR, is based on the same principled and values-based framework as CSR but is far more limited than CSR. CSI focuses on charitable giving or philanthropy, which is giving through CSI projects in sustainable environments, sports, development, health, education, and other community services while creating a positive corporate image through managed public relations benefits while addressing weak areas in public service delivery normally associated with the responsibilities of government. CSI can consequently be defined as a company's responsibility going beyond paying tax, contributing to various social causes while upholding the social contract between business and government by means of financial and non-cash contributions to society. CSI excludes marketable patronage and employee benefits, and constitutes corporate giving beyond its profitable responsibilities and commercial operations as set out in BBBEE Codes of Good Practice, industry charters, socio-economic development plans (SEDs), local economic development plans (LEDs), enterprise and supplier development plans (ESDs) and social and labour plans (SLPs).
CSI, as a construct, has moved away from charitable giving, as it has now been developed into a formalised practice within the broad principled and values-based CSR framework. CSI has consequently become more inclusive of the broader aspects of CSR, which includes sustainable business development, ethics, good corporate governance, empowerment, transformation and innovative social partnerships[14]. In order to remain relevant, businesses need to build a positive social consciousness, legitimacy, credibility and reputation, and demonstrate commitment to government's social transformation agendas. This study was positioned within the broad principled and values-based CSR framework, which includes CSI as an integrated construct. For May, the difference between CSR and CSI is in practice rather than principle. CSR's broad focus is

[14] T. Ndhlovu, Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Social Investment: The South African Case, in Journal of African Business, 2011, vol. 12, n. 1, 72-92.

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inclusive of CSI and the Triple Bottom Line (TBL)[15]. Hence, CSR is not driven only by socioeconomic factors, as implied by the narrow transformation and legislative frameworks underpinning CSI. For the CSR practitioner, this would imply a broad understanding of both constructs in order to manage the complexity and interrelatedness of both concepts. Therefore, CSI and CSR should not be used as synonyms as they represent two distinct concepts.

1.3 International CSR Education

CSR has been an important topic of debate in corporate and academic circles in North America for a very long time[16,17,18]. The debate in Europe has gained extraordinary drive and has surpassed the concept and construct of CSR in practice. CSR is now losing momentum as a concept because of the instrumental ways in which it has been used in business practice[19,20,21,22]. In spite of Martinez's view, the integration of CSR into the curricula of business schools and universities is still current and one of the most significant topics in the global educational world. Orlitzky and Moon noted that CSR has become more ingrained in European institutions of higher education, and argued that this indicates an evolution of CSR as a field of study[23].

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[15] J. May, An understanding of Corporate Social Investment within the context of the Sappi Forest Products Division in South Africa. MBA research report, 2006, Grahamstown, Rhodes University, http://eprints.ru.ac.za/495/1/May_MBA.pdf (accessed January 24, 2012)

[16] J. Asongu, The History of Corporate Social Responsibility, in Journal of Business and Public Policy, 2007, vol. 1, n. 2, 1-18

[17] A. Carroll, Corporate Social Responsibility: Evolution of a Definitional Construct, in Business and Society, 1999, vol. 38, n. 3, 268-295

[18] W. Visser, D. Matten, M. Pohl, N. Tolhurst, The A to Z of Corporate Social Responsibility, Wiley, London, 2010

[19] A. Crane, A. McWilliams, D. Matten, J. Moon, D. Siegel, The Corporate Social Responsibility Agenda, in A. Crane, A. McWilliams, D. Matten, J. Moon, D. & Siegel, (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Corporate Social Responsibility, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008

[20] D. Matten, J. Moon, Corporate Social Responsibility Education in Europe, in Journal of Business Ethics, 2004, vol. 54, n. 4, 323-337

[21] J. Moon, *op.cit*

[22] M. Orlitzky, J. Moon, Second European Survey on Corporate Social Responsibility Research, Education and Other Initiatives in Business Schools and Universities, Paper presented at International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility, Nottingham University Business School, Nottingham, United Kingdom, 2008

[23] M. Orlitzky, J. Moon, *op.cit*

Various international and local universities and business schools participate in efforts of the World Business School Council of Sustainable Business (WBSCSB), the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI), and the United Nations (UN) backed Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME), which bring together experts in various fields to determine the role of business in creating a sustainable future. A total of eight South African universities and business schools have signed up for the PRME codes and have to some extent committed to these codes. These principles do not address the development of practitioners, but focus on the CSR responsibilities at an institutional level.
The European Strategy for Sustainable Development also recognises the important role that education and training systems should play in order to achieve the objectives of CSR. Education and training should, according to the final report submitted by GHK Consulting in association with the Danish Technology Institute Technopolis, contribute to all three critical axes: social, economic and environmental dimensions[24]. Likewise, the Lisbon Agenda and the Education and Training 2010 work programme provided a coherent framework for Education for Sustainable Development at European level[25]. However, there is an information gap on how the concept of education for sustainable development has been translated into practices at Member States level.

1.4 The Gap in CSR Education in South Africa

The global interpretation of CSR as a phenomenon and South African legislation have changed the landscape of CSR within its own context[26,27]. This change is evident in business as well as on an academic level. It presents various challenges in terms of implementing CSR strategies effectively and efficiently on an operational level. Ideally, the implementation of CSR strategies has to comply with the spirit as well as the letter of the law. There is, however, very little guidance in the form of

[24] GHK Consulting, Inventory of innovative practices in education for sustainable development, Paper presented at the Danish Technology Institute Technopolis, Brussels, Belgium, 2008
[25] H. Ertl, European Union policies in education and training: The Lisbon agenda as a turning point?, in Comparative Education, 2006, vol. 42, n. 1, 5-27.
[26] R. Irwin, Corporate social investment and branding in the new South Africa, in Journal of Brand Management, 2003, vol. 10, n. 4, 303-311.
[27] T. Ndhlovu, Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Social Investment, in: The South African Case, in Journal of African Business, 2011, vol. 12, n. 1, 72-92.

learning and development programmes for CSR practitioners focused on bona fide operational practice to ensure effective and efficient CSR strategies across industries. Additionally, sound CSR practices are complicated by a lack of competent CSR practitioners. Njenga and Smit concurred with this argument that there seems to be a lack of competent CSR practitioners in South Africa, and referred to the fact that CSR practitioners often come from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and are therefore isolated from power within business[28]. Not only is there a power barrier, but they also find themselves without resources within corporations. Njenga and Smit argued that CSR practitioners should acquire the necessary competence to promote solid organisational, administration and management skills in CSR structures[29].

A CSR conference in 2006 made it clear that there are insufficient skilled and knowledgeable practitioners in the CSR field, not only in South Africa, but globally. This was mainly due to unclear and indefinable curriculum frameworks for the design, development and implementation of CSR practitioner curricula. Njenga and Smit said that, based on one of their surveys, CSI(R) practitioners, who are seen as the stewards of CSI(R) awareness and the promotion of best practice towards social investment, are discouraged and more often than not feel frustrated, cynical and disempowered. It became clear from their survey data that the feeling of disempowerment can be contributed to a scarcity of adequate skills and knowledge in the field of CSI[30].

Njenga and Smit's findings from 2006 and 2007 regarding the lack of CSR knowledge and skills were re-affirmed by findings from an African study on CSR practice in sub-Saharan Africa by the Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusamenheid (GTZ) in South Africa. Zusamenarbeit found that three major drivers contributed to struggling CSR practitioners in the South African context[31]. The first driver was lack of capacity and experience in the field of CSR. This included the lack of standards, curricula and accreditation of CSR practitioners as well as a lack of skills or tools for external stakeholder engagement. Secondly, CSR practitioners

[28] S. Njenga, A. Smit, Leading the way through CSI: A guidebook for corporate social investment practitioners, Randburg, Knowres Publishing (Pty) Ltd, 2007

[29] S. Njenga, A. Smit, *op.cit*

[30] S. Njenga, A. Smit, *op.cit*

[31] Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Corporate Social Responsibility in sub-Saharan Africa, A survey on promoting and hindering factors, Paper presented at. Pretoria, Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Pretoria, South Africa, 2009

were not sufficiently supported by top management and, lastly, the CSR function and CSR projects (project identification, implementation, evaluation and reporting) were not properly managed. The lack of skilled CSR practitioners in South Africa has not improved since 2006. In a critical evaluation and analysis of the 2012 CSI Matters Conference video footage (hosted by CSI Matters – initiated and managed by Trialogue South Africa, it was found that South Africa's CSR practitioners, according to Bridgit Evans, CEO of the GreaterGood Group , are making the same mistakes they made ten years ago. They are also struggling with learning and, more importantly, learning from each other. The following relevant question has therefore been asked: "How do we draw the learnings into a profession where newcomers can learn those lessons quickly and not make the same mistakes?"[32].

The need for CSR education and the role that CSR education plays in the national and global economy is undisputed. CSR skills and competency development for CSR practitioners have grown considerably with a global focus on CSR development ranging from the United States to Europe. South Africa has not seen the same investment in skills and competency development as North America and Europe. Local and international researchers have been highlighting the CSR skills shortages in South Africa since 2002 and CSR industry thought leaders have more recently confirmed CSR skills shortages and have described the CSR learning and development field as dysfunctional. Therefore, sufficient evidence exists to support the finding of this inquiry, namely that (i) there is a need for CSR skills and competency development and (ii) that the CSR skills gap in South Africa is mainly due to an unclear and indefinable curriculum framework for the design, development, implementation and evaluation of CSR practitioner curricula.

1.5 The Landscape of CSR Training in South Africa

Public and private training providers play a key role in the professional development of CSR practitioners in South Africa[33]. A critical analysis of the available reports from signatories submitted to PRME demonstrate a

[32] Trialogue, 2012, Making CSI Matter 2012, Ongoing Learning - Conclusions from the panel. Video. Available: Youtube.com, TrialogueSA, (accessed, April 4, 2015.

[33] J. Ahmad, D. Crowther, Education and Corporate Social Responsibility: International Perspectives in Developments in Corporate Governance and Responsibility, 2013, vol. 4, 267-296

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commitment to CSR as well as a commitment to what Visser and Hollender referred to as CSR 2.0 or Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility (CSR 2.0). CSR 2.0 is characterised by five key principles: creativity, scalability, responsiveness, glocality [sic] and circularity[34]. It is difficult to find stand-alone CSR training programmes because higher education providers that offer CSR-related development opportunities mostly refer to their programmes in terms of ethics, governance and sustainable or responsible management, and not in terms of CSR or CSI.

1.6 Educational Innovations

Various business schools and academic institutions in South Africa offer stand-alone or integrated modules on sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Programmes and teaching methodologies are built around the development of case studies and teaching methods, such as experiential and action learning with associated teaching materials, simulations and role-plays. Baets argued that an integrated approach is essential for the development of CSR learning and development opportunities[35]. A cohesive approach therefore leads to content innovation, didactic innovation and universal learning experiences that influence students. The aim of an innovative and integrated didactic approach is to change the mind-sets of students to look beyond attaining a qualification to contributing to business and the communities in which they operate. An integrated didactic approach would imply "that learning experiments should have a focus on: systems thinking, action learning, community involvement, real life deliverables, involvement of real life parties", and should therefore take place "in the field" [36].
University of Stellenbosch Business School (USB), Nelson Mandela University Business School (NMMU), University of Kwazulu (UKZN) Natal School of Management, University of Cape Town Business School (UCT) and University of Pretoria Business School (GIBS) are examples of South African business schools that created educational frameworks in line with the Principles for Responsible Management Education's (PRME) Principle 3, that is, the development of educational frameworks,

[34] Visser, W. & Hollender, J. 2011. The Age of Responsibility: CSR 2.0 and the New DNA of Business. London: Wiley.
[35] W. Baets, Why it is time for a new business school model, and what it could look like, Paper presented at University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business, Cape Town, South Africa, 2013
[36] W. Baets, *op.cit*

materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership[37,38,39]. In line with leading business schools around the world, South African private and public tertiary providers have adopted a didactic approach that enables social engagement between business, society and the staff and students of academic institutions, allowing these stakeholders to be "socially engaged" in their respective communities. Social engagement within educational frameworks are thus fundamental to creating practical learning and experience to develop competencies associated with CSR and responsible leadership. Tertiary education may be inaccessible to most entry-level and mid-career CSR practitioners as a result of stringent admission requirements and the high costs of attending good business schools and centres of excellence. Hence, short courses presented by less expensive and/or non-accredited training providers could become a viable option for CSR practitioners who seek to develop their CSR-related competencies.

Before presenting the analysis and findings of the study, the approach and methodology is outlined with a focus on the third and final phase.

2. Approach and Methodology

One might assume that there will be knowledge, skills and behavioural gaps in the development of future CSR practitioners if there is no framework for the design and development of a CSR practitioner curriculum. In the absence of a curriculum framework for the development of CSR practitioners, uncertainty will prevail in terms of the skills, knowledge and behavioural components to be included in such a curriculum framework. An equally important hurdle to overcome is to determine who should inform the curriculum framework. In the absence of substantial information to support the design and development of a

[37] University of Stellenbosch Business School (USB), Academic offering, 2015, http://www.usb.ac.za/Pages/AboutUs/Academic-offering.aspx, (accessed December 14, 2015)

[38] Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), NMMU Business School: Principles of Responsible Management, 2015, http://www.unprme.org/reports/NMMUBusinessSchoolPRMEapplication.pdf (accessed December 15, 2015)

[39] University of KwaZulu-Natal School of Management, IT and Governance (UKZN School of Management), Undergraduate Prospectus 2015, http://applications.ukzn.ac.za/Files/UKZNPostgrad_lowres.pdf. (accessed December 14, 2015)

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widely accepted or national curriculum, a CSR practitioner curriculum framework seems to be in urgent need of development.
This is thus an attempt to meet the needs of stakeholders (CSR practitioners, organisations and higher education institutions) if the purpose of the original intentions of Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) in South Africa is to be properly served. All of these questions seemed relevant to the problem at hand. However, for the purpose of the study, one primary research question emerged, constituting the focus of the study:

What constitutes a curriculum framework for the professional development of CSR practitioners in South Africa?

A mix-methods study was undertaken in three distinct phases aimed at the development of a curriculum framework for the professional development of entry-level to mid-career corporate social responsibility practitioners in the South African context. The research involved a multi-phased, sequential explanatory mixed-method study within a pragmatic knowledge paradigm. Multiple data collection methods were used across three distinct phases, and each phase was sub-divided into two strands. Empirical data for the inquiry included qualitative and quantitative data generated via questionnaires, focus groups and interviews directed at CSR practitioners, CSR academics and CSR managers in the field of CSR. It also included a Delphi exercise with a panel of CSR specialists, focus group interviews with CSR representatives across South Africa, and telephone interviews with a group of CSR practitioners, CSR academics and CSR managers across the country.
The execution of the empirical part of this inquiry was divided in to three phases and each phase had two distinct strands with specific objectives. The objectives for each phase were linked to the research question and each phase was guided by the subsidiary research questions, which aimed at answering the main research question. The research was thus planned to involve at least three phases and the data collection and analysis of each phase involved answering the questions highlighted after a brief discussion of each phase:

2.1 Phase 1

The first phase of the research project comprised quantitative and qualitative data to explore the roles and functions assigned to corporate social responsibility practitioners, and the most effectual and proficient

competencies required by corporate social responsibility practitioners. This was achieved by using a questionnaire survey to collect primary data provided by the collective insight of corporate social responsibility experts and then using focus group interviews to review the proposed first draft of the corporate social responsibility competency framework to gain a deeper understanding of the proposed competencies. Qualitative data were thus generated from a group of experts by subjecting them to a series of questionnaires, focus-group interviews and controlled opinion feedback.

Phase 1 questions:

- Strand 1: What are the most common functions attributed to the role of the CSR practitioner?
- Strand 2: Which elements of skills, knowledge and behaviour are required for effectively managing the CSR function within South African organisations and within the parameters of South African legislation, including industry-specific codes and standards?

2.2 Phase 2

The second phase involved ranking and further exploring the competencies identified in the first phase of the study to better inform the competencies and competency definitions. In this exploratory follow-up phase, the competencies were explored with practitioners through an iterative e-mail questionnaire typically associated with the classic Delphi method. The Delphi consensus process was then followed by the formulation and classification of a hierarchical competency framework with the competencies identified in Phases 1 and 2 of the data process. The competency framework identified and classified competencies into a hierarchical framework with eight high-level factors, 22 dimensions at the competency level and 100 components at the behavioural level. A panel of three academics and 15 experts validated the conceptual competency framework.

Phase 2: questions

- Strand 1: What is the hierarchy of significance of the above elements for the CSR practitioner?
- Strand 2: Which functions can possibly be grouped together in the CSR practitioner's portfolio as functional building blocks

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2.3 Phase 3

The third and final phase of the research aimed at validating the proposed conceptual competency framework through a self-administered online questionnaire. The quantitative strand of the questionnaire aimed to validate the conceptual framework. This was followed up with telephonic interviews. The aim of the final empirical phase of the study was not only to generate expert agreement, but also to fill in the gaps and to identify expert opinion on the most critical competencies required to be a successful corporate social practitioner.

Phase 3 questions:

- Strand 1: What is the hierarchy of significance of the competencies for the CSR practitioner?
- Strand 2: Which validated competencies should be included in a proposed competency framework?

2.4 Reaching agreement on Tier 3 CSR- competency definition validity

In order to reach agreement on the validity of the eight Tier-3 CSR competency descriptors, the total weighted average score had to be higher than 80%. The total weighted average score calculation keys – strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree – were assigned nominal values of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. The sum of the number of responses, multiplied by their nominal value, was divided by the maximum score obtainable. Any top-tier competency descriptors meeting the validation criteria were thus included in the final draft competency framework.

2.5 Testing Tier-3 CSR competency validity: hypothesis

As with the Delphi in Strand 1 of Phase 2, statistical hypothesis testing, which is usually done at a 5% significance level and confidence intervals computed with 95% confidence was done. This inquiry, however, included agreement at 99.9% confidence intervals for a sample of size n=40. Statistical hypothesis testing was utilised to either reject or accept the critical competencies identified, which means the Tier-3 CSR competency descriptor is valid and should or should not be included in the final CSR competency framework.

The study culminated in the development of a validated curriculum framework for the professional development of corporate social responsibility practitioners in South Africa which is compatible with the requirements of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework, the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework and the South African Qualifications Authority. For the first time in corporate social responsibility literature in South Africa, as far as can be determined, this research presents findings reported in the form of a curriculum framework, which may serve as a guideline for curriculum designers and policy makers

3. CSR Curriculum Framework

Curriculum construction is highly contextualised in response to the complex needs of society, resulting in a range of definitions, philosophical underpinnings, theories, design and development approaches. In order to bring all of latter together in a fundamental document that presents the elements of a proposed curriculum system, it is important to provide a structure for designing interdependent themes, a values rationale, principles, and goals within the context and field of CSR and CSI for subsequent curriculum development. A curriculum framework (both as a concept and as a tool for broadly organising curriculum elements) would for this reason serve as a guide to aid educationalists in their curriculum decision making for the design and development of learning and development programmes, in particular for CSR practitioners in South Africa. Bevis argued that a curriculum framework should be viewed as a dynamic document and that formulating or suggesting a curriculum framework serves as nothing more than an "intellectual exercise" if it cannot be used as a source for (i) deriving criteria for content, (ii) teaching methods, (iii) evaluation methods and (iv) human relationships[40].
As an open-ended guide and less prescriptive document, a curriculum framework, according to Marsh, typically includes: a clear statement of results, scope and parameters, which should be consistent with the learning outcomes, broad goals, objectives and purpose for themes within the curriculum areas[41]. The framework offers broad outlines for curriculum outcomes and places emphasis on the desired outcomes

[40] E. Bevis, Curriculum Building in Nursing: A Process, Burlington, Jones & Bartlett Learning, 1989
[41] C. Marsh, Key Concepts for Understanding Curriculum, Routledge, London, 2009

offering sufficient flexibility to curriculum makers to develop additional learning and teaching outcomes according to their circumstances, philosophy and the needs of their students as well as setting out what skills, knowledge and behaviour (competencies) should be developed, namely what learners should know, understand and value and be able to do as a result of undertaking a learning and development programme. And finally it should ideally have very clear guiding principles on teaching, learning, and assessment for students to achieve the outcomes articulated in the framework, linked to guidelines for the evaluation and assessment of themes should be unambiguous as these form the basis for and define the quality of evaluation and assessment[42].

The purpose of a curriculum framework would be to allow educational institutions responsible for curriculum development and CSR practitioners and managers in organisations to understand the critical components required to develop the competences of CSR practitioners in South Africa. The framework further aims to provide a common framework or mainstay that articulates the skills, knowledge and attitudes (behaviours) relevant for successful CSR practice. A graphic representation of a preliminary theoretical framework is presented in Figure 1.

The CSR framework is based on possible competences identified through the empirical inquiry of the study, literature and theoretical review as discussed in this study. The starting point is identifying and understanding the CSR competences required to become successful CSR practitioners. These competences comprise three separate but interrelated elements (which are entirely in line with SAQA's definitions of applied competence): (1) Foundational competence, (2) Practical competence and (3) Reflexive competence[43].

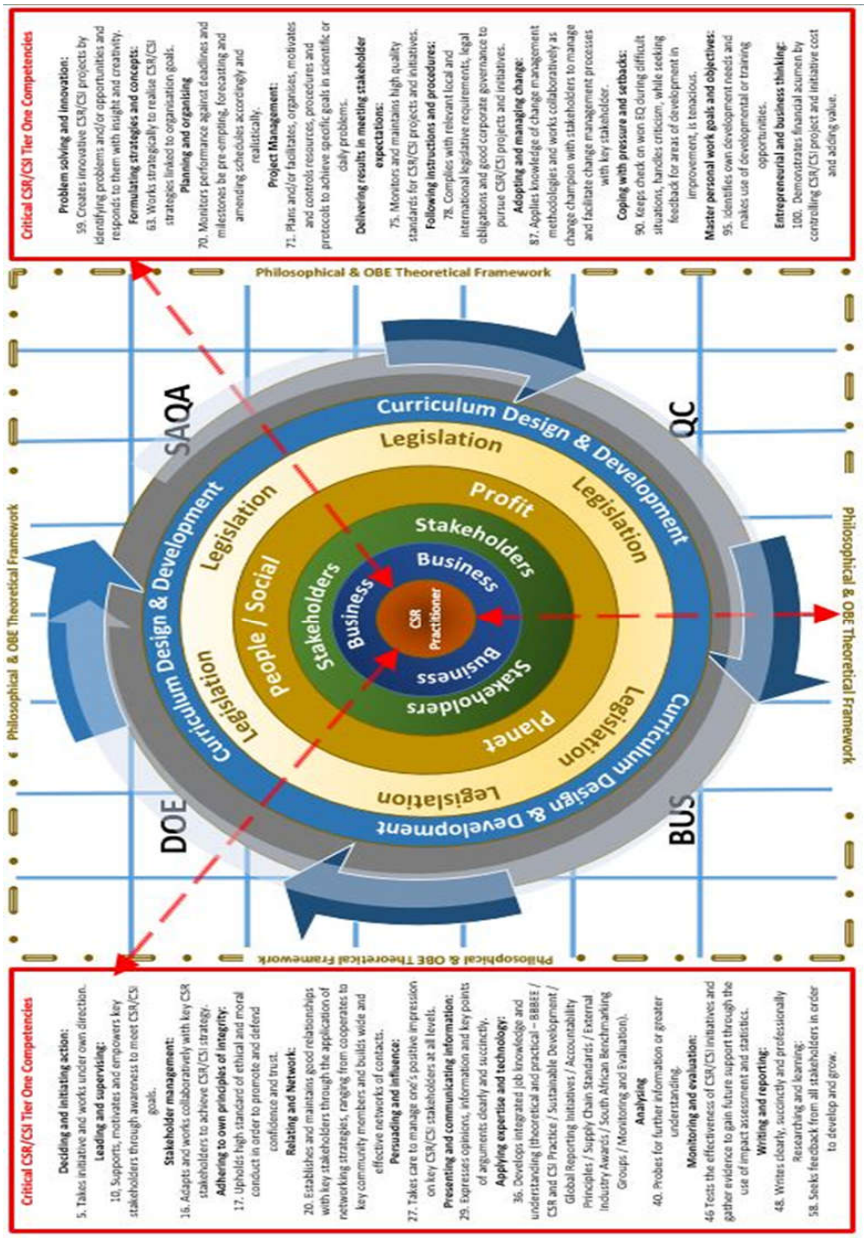
These three components are inter-related and they complement each other. It is the combination of these competencies that gives rise to key behaviours demonstrated by people. The interconnectivity and relationship among the three elements are critical to understand and describe CSR activities and functions. The framework is envisaged to be a flexible tool, meeting the needs of industry and those involved in curriculum development. The proposed framework consists of seven dimensions that describe a range of competences required to integrate

[42] C. Marsh, *op.cit*

[43] South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), The South African Qualifications Authority, Level Descriptors for the South African National Qualifications Framework, 2012, http://www.saqa.co.za (accessed September 5, 2014)

CSR in business. It further takes into consideration the application across a range of business functions such as: (1) Marketing, (2) Human resources, (3) Finance, (5) Supply chain management, (6) Planning and (7) Operations.

Figure 1: Proposed CSR Curriculum Framework



The need for a flexible framework that takes into consideration a range of business functions is evident in the literature because the "CSR practitioner" role is not exclusive to CSR as it may require individuals to operate within a range of other specialist fields in business. Focusing on the individual CSR practitioner's role may be important. Hence, the next section will review the competences, and areas of competence, which may be required to be a potentially successful practitioner. The proposed CSR practitioner curriculum framework is flanked on the left and right by 22 Tier-1 CSR competencies, as illustrated in Table 1.

The competencies have been identify as priority competencies required to be a successful CSR practitioners. The Tier-1 competencies should be broken down in to their component parts: skills, knowledge and behaviours. The component parts would need to be identified and described in relation to the CSR framework, the CSR dimensions and within the context and application of the curriculum framework. The complete competency framework could be used to identify and combine two or more priority competencies in order to address specific learning areas or CSR dimensions. The objective of the CSR framework is not to be prescriptive, but to offer flexible solutions to curriculum developers and policy makers who are tasked with the development of specific CSR curricula.

3.1 Dimension 1: CSR Practitioner

At the centre of the framework is a set of core CSR competences with a strong focus on the CSR practitioner, bringing together the personal qualities, attitudes and mind-sets which CSR practitioners may need to learn and which in turn may drive improvements in CSR management practice. These competences could be linked to the personal belief system closest to the cause or organisational context of CSR and the alignment of social, environment and economic performance to long-term business strategy and performance. Focusing on the development of personal or value-driven competences at the core of the framework may enable the development of a CSR and business knowledge base, the skills, knowledge and the right attitudes and reflexes to be an effective and efficient practitioner who will ultimately influence CSR business practice in all outward dimensions and contextual roles.

The CSR practitioner, as illustrated in Figure 1, is thus placed (and remains) at the centre of the curriculum framework. One of the most significant conclusions to be drawn from this investigation is the ability of the CSR practitioner to demonstrate four interconnected competencies:

self-awareness, emotional intelligence, self-management and self-assessment. These competencies form the very core of successful CSR practitioners and may thus be viewed as the core building blocks for personal and professional development and mastery. The professional development journey of the CSR practitioners must start with the ability of CSR practitioners to recognise their own emotions and the impact of this on the self, the business and stakeholders.

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Table 1: Tier-1 CSR critical competencies
Competency
10. Supports, motivates and empowers key stakeholders through awareness to meet CSR/CSI goals
16. Adapts and works collaboratively with key stakeholders to achieve CSR/CSI strategy
17. Upholds high standards of ethical and moral conduct in order to promote and defend confidence and trust
20. Establishes and maintains good relationships with key stakeholders through the application of networking strategies, ranging from corporates to key community members and builds wide and effective networks of contacts
27. Takes care to manage one's positive impression on key stakeholders at all levels
29. Expresses opinions, information and key points of arguments clearly and succinctly
36. Develops integrated job knowledge and understanding (theoretical and practical - BBBEE / CSR and CSI Practice / Sustainable Development / Global Reporting Initiative / Accountability Principles / Supply Chain Standard / External Industry Awards / South African Benchmarking Groups / Monitoring and Evaluation)
40. Probes for further information or higher understanding of a problem
46. Tests the effectiveness of CSR/CSI initiatives and gather evidence to gain future support through the use of impact assessments and statistics
48. Writes clearly, succinctly, correctly and professionally
58. Seeks feedback from all stakeholders in order to develop and grow
59. Creates innovative CSR/CSI projects and initiatives by identifying problems and/or opportunities and responds to them with insight and creativity
63. Works strategically to realise CSR/CSI strategies linked to organisational goals
70. Monitors performance against deadlines and milestones by pre-empting, forecasting and amending schedules accordingly and realistically
71. Plans and/or facilitates, organises, motivates and controls resources, procedures and protocols to achieve specific goals in scientific or daily problems
75. Monitors and maintains high quality standards for CSR/CSI projects

and initiatives
78. Complies with relevant local and international legislative requirement, legal obligations and good corporate governance to pursue CSR/CSI projects and initiatives;
87. Applies knowledge of change management methodologies and works collaboratively as change champion with stakeholders to manage and facilitate change management processes with key stakeholders
90. Keeps check on own EQ during difficult situation; handles criticism well, while seeking feedback for areas of development in improvement; is tenacious;
95. Identifies own development needs and makes use of developmental or training opportunities
100. Demonstrates financial acumen by controlling CSR/CSI project and initiative costs and adding value.

The CSR environment is described as complex, stressful and very often emotionally charged. Self-awareness, self-management and self-assessment are viewed to represent the foundation of emotional intelligence because without being aware of and having an understanding of their own emotions, CSR practitioners will find it virtually impossible to move into other emotional competencies like self-management and social awareness, which form the foundation of CSR practice.

Self-awareness, self-assessment and the ability to be vocally self-critical involve honesty, integrity, resilience and, more importantly, the ability to investigate and acknowledge personal emotional strengths and weaknesses. Those practitioners who are unable to, or fail to, reflect on experiences and who are unable to articulate key actions required to address their own development gaps may struggle in CSR practice. Being vocally self-critical and developing a capability for self-assessment are essential in an environment with very little professional guidance and support for personal and work-related skills development. CSR practitioners must demonstrate the willingness to learn from new experiences and more importantly demonstrate an ability to learn skills to master personal effectiveness competencies. CSR practitioners should be able to work as change agents, demonstrating drive, adaptability, flexibility, tenacity and emotional intelligence. Always working with unknown variables, CSR practitioners should be able to demonstrate emotional intelligence first in order to learn from successes and mistakes.

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The ability of CSR practitioners to create alignment between their personal belief systems and economic, environmental and social demands may impact their performance and the business's strategic intent towards social responsibility and transformation in the long run.
The first dimension is underpinned by four critical competencies, which attained a 100% validation agreement score, which is 19.1% higher than the critical limit of 80.9%; (1) Identifies own development needs and makes use of developmental or training opportunities, (2) Seeks feedback from all stakeholders in order to develop and grow, (3) Upholds high standards of ethical and moral conduct in order to promote and defend confidence and trust, and (4) Keeps check on own EQ during difficult situation; handles criticism well, while seeking feedback for areas of development in improvement; is tenacious.

2.2 Dimension 2: CSR and business

Successful CSR practitioners demonstrate a level of understanding of the business, markets, stakeholders, competitors and the business model to make CSR-related decisions while building a business case with the aim to be relevant in the boardroom. In addition to the ability to remain relevant in the boardroom, practitioners may also need to demonstrate the ability to develop and maintain strategic CSR business networks, which will provide business and CSR information and intelligence in order to assimilate advanced CSR concepts and constructs within the business strategy. The focus group participants linked budgets and reporting, business acumen, financial accounting and reporting and organisational and environmental awareness to enterprising and performing, and argued that mastering personal work goals and objectives is best represented by budgets and reporting, business acumen, financial accounting and reporting and organisational and environmental awareness.
Critical to the success of CSR practitioners is their ability to link CSR strategy with the business strategy. CSR strategic intent, plans, vision and mission are often viewed as problematic because they are not aligned with the business strategy. It is thus critical for CSR practitioners to develop CSR strategies as well as to take the initiative to influence the integration of business and CSR strategies. The questionnaire respondents made a clear distinction between a CSR/CSI manager and a CSR/CSI practitioner. Indications were also that a CSI practitioner should have a solid grounding in the principles of strategic leadership and strategy formulation. However, in most corporate structures, senior leadership executives (CSI Director/Trustees), and not the CSI practitioner, will take

responsibility and ownership of strategic CSR leadership and CSR strategy formulation. Based on the latter, it would appear vital for a CSR practitioner to provide direction and leadership for a company's CSI programme and for it to be developed in line with business objectives. The majority of the respondents made specific reference to the alignment between the business and its CSR strategy. Here they argued that the CSR practitioner must be able to make the connections between the strategic business objectives and strategic CSR intent to build a strong business case for CSR.

Financial acumen is the last competency in the CSR competency framework, and the telephone interview participants deliberated on several critical behaviours CSR practitioners need to demonstrate to effectively understand and use CSR-related financial reports. The first behaviour identified by the interviewees is the ability to read financial statement with insight. The second is the ability to use financial terms in reporting on CSR projects or programmes. One of the most common terms identified by the participants is return on investment (ROI) and more importantly, social return on investment. CSR practitioners are often required to draft budgets for projects and should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the business financial statements and standard budgeting processes and procedures to effectively draft project budgets. The last behaviour is to accurately track and report on expenditure.

The second dimension is underpinned by seven critical competencies, which attained a 100% validation agreement score, which is 19.1% higher than the critical limit of 80.9%; (1) Takes initiative and works under own direction, (2) Creates innovative CSR/CSI projects and initiatives by identifying problems and/or opportunities and responds to them with insight and creativity, (3) Works strategically to realise CSR/CSI strategies linked to organisational goals, (4) Monitors performance against deadlines and milestones by pre-empting, forecasting and amending schedules accordingly and realistically, (5) Plans and/or facilitates, organises, motivates and controls resources, procedures and protocols to achieve specific goals in scientific or daily problems, (6) Demonstrates financial acumen by controlling CSR/CSI project and initiative costs and adding value and (7) Expresses opinions, information and key points of arguments clearly and succinctly.

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3.3 Dimension 3: Stakeholder management

The next dimension is the stakeholder dimension which represents stakeholders and key stakeholders across all triple bottom line (TBL) focus areas. Relevant literature suggests that stakeholders form an integral part of the most critical dimensions of CSR and refers to the ability of the practitioner and organisation to interact with employees, suppliers, customers and communities. CSR practitioners may need to demonstrate applied competence in the design, development and implementation of integrated strategic shared value creation (CSV) practice in business, but the scope of the strategy development may be influenced by the introduction of the stakeholder theory and specific CSR models. Demonstrating competence in strategic thinking and management would imply that the CSR practitioner is able to create socially conscious investments linked to shared value for key stakeholders. Demonstrating the former and the latter may require a foundational knowledge of stakeholder theory and the ability to apply a stakeholder management framework and philosophy in order to be responsive to the legitimate needs of stakeholders.

It became evident from analysing and interpreting the qualitative data from the telephone interviews that CSR may be part of complex systems. CSR practitioners need to demonstrate the ability to establish and maintain good relationships and networking frameworks with key stakeholders. Networking is viewed by interview participants as a tactical and deliberate activity for CSR practitioners. Without the networks and relationships, CSR practitioners run the danger of becoming isolated from the CSR community and, as a consequence, do not develop CSR best practice. There is also a real danger of duplicating efforts if the CSR practitioner is not a member of a wider CSR network. The telephone interviewees identified various benefits of strategic networking, such as building long-term relationships, learning and sharing best practice, benchmarking best practice, and collaboration and building a strategic network for addressing far higher socio-economic issues to help transform communities.

Identifying, understanding and managing the perceptions that key stakeholders have of the CSR practitioner may help the CSR practitioner to build trust between all actors in the stakeholder management relationship. This perception may influence the quality of long-term stakeholder relationships. One of the stronger themes identified after analysis of the qualitative data from the telephone interviews is that CSR practitioners may need to develop stakeholder mapping as a tool to

determine the levels of influence stakeholders may have on CSR initiatives. Building relationships of trust and positive influence by engaging with stakeholders at all levels may be viewed as a proactive approach to stakeholder management. This could be used by CSR practitioners as relationship capital during challenging times.

Five themes linked to change and change management were identified during the qualitative data analysis of the telephone interviews. The first theme raised by the interviewees refers to skills and knowledge linked to change and change management principles. As one interviewee noted, the CSR practitioner operates in an environment filled with "… unknown variables or things that you cannot control". The CSR practitioner must therefore recognise and apply change principles suited to the specific context. The second theme identified through the analysis is an acute awareness of the change environment, linked to specific change strategies, especially those linked to cultural, political, socio-economic, legislative and individual change. The third theme relates to the ability of the CSR practitioner to identify the sources of change while remaining open to ideas with the intent to solve problems without losing site of the needs of the business and the key stakeholders.

The fourth theme is summarised by the following extract from one of the interview participants: "… *some do it [manage change] naturally, for example, tolerating ambiguity. Tolerating ambiguity is a very unusual skill because one would think, no, no, no, we always have to be clear and yet a lot of messy problems aren't clear and one needs patience and tenacity sometimes, and the capacity to sit with a situation which is not always clear. Now that for me is maturity and emotional intelligence.*" The CSR practitioner must tolerate ambiguity, but must also minimise complexities and reduce uncertainty by implementing clear communication plans. The last theme hinges on cultural diversity. CSR practitioners must understand the cultural nuances and direct actions, taking into consideration the culture of the business in which they work and the culture of the communities in which they work.

The analysis of the telephone interview data implies that the interviewees are of the opinion that the starting point for CSR practitioners to present and communicate information would be to demonstrate their aptitude for developing and implementing clear and concise communication plans (strategies). The interview participants noted that CSR practitioners need to be aware of and adhere to all relevant internal and external policies, processes and procedures (including legislative guidelines, where applicable) before engaging in communication with stakeholders. CSR practitioners need to understand the impact of expressing opinions, information and key points clearly and succinctly through a range of

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communication channels, including corporate branding, online platforms (the internet, e-mail) and social media platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). It is expected of CSR practitioners to communicate with diverse stakeholders. Therefore, CSR practitioners need to be astute in managing and presenting professionally to diverse audiences.
The third dimension is underpinned by four critical competencies, which attained a 100% validation agreement score, which is 19.1% higher than the critical limit of 80.9%; (1) Adapts and works collaboratively with key stakeholders to achieve CSR/CSI strategy, (2) Establishes and maintains good relationships with key stakeholders through the application of networking strategies, ranging from corporates to key community members and builds wide and effective networks of contacts, (3) Takes care to manage one's positive impression on key stakeholders at all levels, and (4) Applies knowledge of change management methodologies and works collaboratively as change champion with stakeholders to manage and facilitate change management processes with key stakeholders.

3.4 Dimension 4: People, profit and planet

In Figure 1, the three red dotted arrows moving outwards and inwards across all dimensions intentionally link all dimensions within the framework with the CSR philosophical framework and clearly divides the framework into three focus areas of business, which is generally referred to as the TBL: people, profit and planet. The King Report underscores the importance of the TBL and literature suggests that the TBL forms a fundamental part of CSR and that the CSR practitioner participates within a complete open system. It is thus not surprising that the King Report underscores the importance of TBL and encourages business to adopt the TBL model in an effort to stimulate sustainable development in South Africa[44,45]. A company, albeit a legal economic institution, remains a corporate citizen and is therefore responsible for creating shared value by creating a balance between economic, social and environmental value[46].
The introduction of the TBL by Elkington forced businesses to focus on the financial bottom line as well as their social and environmental

[44] Institute of Directors in Southern Africa (IoDSA), King Report on Governance for South Africa 2009, *cit.*
[45] Institute of Directors in Southern Africa (IoDSA), Draft Report on Governance for South Africa and the Draft Code of Governance Principles, Report presented to the Institute of Directors in Southern Africa, Parklands, South Africa, 2009
[46] Institute of Directors in Southern Africa (IoDSA), *op.cit.*

impact[47,48,49]. TBL is therefore an accounting framework that integrates the three dimensions generally referred to as the 3Ps: people, profit and planet. Fisk expanded on Elkington's model to illustrate the connection and influence between the individual pillars[50]. He perceived the concept to demonstrate economic growth as only being successful when environmental and social requirements are decisively integrated in all business activities as part of business strategic priorities[51]. He also argued that people, planet and profit is an advanced and connected approach to business, but warned that TBL will need far more progressive systems thinking and that CSR practitioners will have to be innovative and creative.

An important factor is the emphasis on the value add (or detraction), not only on return on investment ROI (economic), but also on a social and environmental level. The three areas of knowledge and practice form part of the business's strategic priorities and also require an ability for progressive systems thinking, which is the ability to be innovative and creative to address social, environmental and economic challenges. Understanding the interrelated and interconnected TBL concepts is as important as the aptitude to clearly communicate the importance of the concepts in relation to CSR projects and activities. The theoretical and empirical data, when analysed and interpreted, highlighted that successful practitioners make links between people, profit and planet, or the financial and social performance of business. This demonstrates a focus on financial literacy and financial acumen. CSR practitioners understand how business makes money versus social investment and responsibility, and what is required to optimise the social ROI in order to increase the value, drive and impact of social responsiveness, responsibility and sustainability. The three dotted red arrows intentionally move outwards from the practitioner across all dimensions to link the CSR practitioner with every dimension, from a TBL perspective to the philosophical and ultimately

[47] S. Kaushik, Corporate conceptions of triple bottom line reporting, An empirical analysis into the signs and symbols driving this fashionable framework, in Social Responsibility Journal, 2012, vol. 8, n. 3, 312-326

[48] W. Norman, C. MacDonald, Getting to the bottom line of "Triple Bottom Line", in Business Ethics Quarterly, 2004, vol. 14, n.2, 243-262

[49] J. Stoddard, C. Pollard, M. Evans, The Triple Bottom Line, A Framework for Sustainable Tourism Development, in. International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration, 2012, vol. 13, n. 3, 233-258

[50] P. Fisk, People, Planet, Profit, London, Kogan Page Limited, 2010

[51] P. Fisk, *op. cit.*

the critical Tier-1 CSR competencies on the outer wings of the CSR curriculum framework. The TBL focus areas are viewed as complex, and the CSR practitioner would need to demonstrate the ability to implement progressive systems thinking, also known as innovative and creative response strategies, to deal with the interconnected complex systems from a futures thinking perspective.

The fourth dimension is underpinned by five critical competencies, which attained a 100% validation agreement score, which is 19.1% higher than the critical limit of 80.9%; (1) Develops integrated job knowledge and understanding (theoretical and practical - BBBEE / CSR and CSI Practice / Sustainable Development / Global Reporting Initiative / Accountability Principles / Supply Chain Standard / External Industry Awards / South African Benchmarking Groups / Monitoring and Evaluation), (2) Probes for further information or higher understanding of a problem, (3) Tests the effectiveness of CSR/CSI initiatives and gather evidence to gain future support through the use of impact assessments and statistics, (4) Writes clearly, succinctly, correctly and professionally, and (5) Monitors and maintains high quality standards for CSR/CSI projects and initiatives.

3.5 Dimension 5: Legislation

The literature suggests that respect for applicable legislation and for collective agreements between social partners is a prerequisite for successful CSR practice. Legislation influences CSR practice and may in some instances dictate the nature and scope of acceptable CSR projects and initiatives in line with the constitutional requirements for social justice and addressing socio-economic inequalities in South Africa. CSR in South Africa is influenced by corporate rationality as well as by broader legislative requirements and more specifically industry and sector codes of good practice. The South African legislative framework shapes the definition, dimensions, scope and understanding of CSR within the operational context of business and communities. It implies that the CSR practitioner may need to demonstrate foundational and practical competence to manage the drivers influencing their CSR strategic intent in relation to internal and external drivers of CSR strategy.

Factors influencing the skill(s) of CSR practitioners to navigate complex legislative frameworks and industry charters may thus be linked to legislative acumen, which is about the ability to interpret, define and work within and between legislative frameworks such as BBBEE and good corporate governance. The EC further stated that respect for applicable

legislation and for collective agreements between social partners is a prerequisite for meeting that responsibility.
The fifth dimension is underpinned by one critical competence, which attained a 100% validation agreement score, which is 19.1% higher than the critical limit of 80.9%; (1) Complies with relevant local and international legislative requirement, legal obligations and good corporate governance to pursue CSR/CSI projects and initiatives.

3.6 Dimension 6: Curriculum design and development

The curriculum design and development dimension is intentionally placed on the outer peripheral of all the dimensions (closest to the QC, philosophical framework and SAQA) because the curriculum is contextually shaped, influenced and understood by all the role players within the context of CSR and business in society. CSR practitioners immersed in praxis would bring their theoretical thoughts to every decision, adapting their actions in the field of CSR practice to ensure that they continue to encourage learning and sustainable change for social good.
The design and development elements, as determined from the literature, may have to take into account the needs of all the contextual role players, starting at the core of the framework: the CSR practitioner, business, stakeholders, industry bodies, legislative frameworks, SAQA and other formal and informal educational role players such as society at large.

3.7 Dimension 7: Business, DOE, SAQA and Quality Councils

The needs of all contextual role players are of equal importance as the framework may not be accepted unless it adheres to the requirements of all statutory bodies and legislative structures, which include South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), Department of Education (DOE) and Quality Councils (QC). Additional factors taken into consideration within the seventh dimension is an awareness of both national and international trends in terms of CSR education and the high demand for technology-based and lifelong learning (professional development planning).

3.8 Philosophical grounding

The study confirmed that any CSR curriculum must be grounded in a philosophical framework. CSR practitioners are seen as change agents and

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change managers. Hence, CSR practitioners cannot be passive participants in the learning process; they have to critically engage with key stakeholders. A Freirean approach to education may provide CSR scholars with an opportunity to genuinely participate in learning and create knowledge through praxis in directing their own professional learning while articulating their own moral purpose. For this to happen, an equilibrium between theoretical frameworks, knowledge, knowledge creation and experience in any curriculum framework seems important. CSR practitioners cannot be passive participants in the learning process because they are not empty vessels who seek to be filled with the gift of knowledge by those who consider themselves knowledgeable[52,53]. They have to be given the opportunity to critically engage in didactic dialogue and should be given the opportunity to reflect, become self-aware through a shift in consciousness, and then act in the best interest of their stakeholders – the societies in which they work and business in society[54,55]. CSR, as defined in this study, is understood as businesses' responsibility in social and environmental contexts over and above legally mandated minimum standards. CSR is an integral part of the socio-economic (development) culture in South Africa. The development of a CSR curriculum framework could therefore be strengthened by two closely related ideologies: Liberation Pedagogy and Critical Theory. This claim is based on the premise that most philosophical viewpoints are not appropriate in neo-liberal emerging markets such as South Africa with an opaque and inflexible regulatory framework[56]. This legal framework, created by a socialist and populist government, aims to promote BBBEE through imposing stringent corporate governance and BBBEE legislative guidelines in support of social transformation, vested in the transfer of ownership and control of the means of production and distribution of capital and land to previously disadvantaged South Africans [57].

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[52] P. Freire, M. Shaughnessy, E. Galligan, R. De Vivas, Pioneers in Education, Essays in Honor of Paulo Freire. New York, Nova Science Publishers, Incorporated, 2008

[53] A. Pollard, Readings for Reflective Teaching. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2002

[54] M. Gadotti, Reading Paulo Freire, His Life and Work. Albany,: State University of New York Press, 1994

[55] G. Gutek, Philosophical and Ideological Voices in Education, Toronto, Pearson/A & B, 2004.

[56] A. Harley, "We are Poor, not Stupid, Learning from Autonomous, in B. Hall, D. Clover, J. Crowther, E. Scandrett, E. (ed.), Learning and Education for a Better World, The Role of Social Movements, Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, 2013

[57] W. Visser, 2015. RE: PhD Curriculum Studies - University of Stellenbosch. E-mail communication

The purists of both Liberation Pedagogy and Critical Theory would argue that they are cynical about the motives of CSR and business in society[58]. Critical Theory is therefore proposed as a means to investigate the unarticulated logic of CSR in an effort to identify which competences CSR practitioners require to connect CSR activities with communities and business strategy[59]. The expectation is that both Critical Theory and Liberation Pedagogy could offer a philosophical foundation to create competency and curriculum connections among CSR practitioners, society, academic institutions, academics and business in society[60]. If the objective of CSR is to make a justifiable difference in the lives of the people and communities on which corporates depend for profitability by reaching out to them, then it makes sense for CSR practitioners to engage in more than the simple act of corporate giving only. CSR practitioners should also engage with communities on a level that would see their emancipation from poverty through various initiatives leading to sustainable growth, development and independence from the "corporate givers". The corporates would almost mandate that the starting point of true transformation becomes the development of a CSR curriculum framework and the education of CSR practitioners to bring about a new social and social-economic awareness.

This would necessitate a move away from the "banking concept" of education which sees the CSR practitioner as an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge and theory. The latter may put CSR practitioners at risk of accepting the CSR space and the role of business in society as it is, without developing critical consciousness to become influential change agents within the CSR domain[61,62]. A Freirean approach to education may provide CSR scholars with an opportunity to genuinely participate in learning and to create knowledge through praxis in order to control their own education while articulating their own moral purpose. For this to happen, there needs to be equilibrium between theoretical frameworks, knowledge, knowledge creation and experience. These constructs cannot

[58] G. Gutek, *op.cit.*

[59] A. Crane, The Oxford Handbook of Corporate Social Responsibility, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008

[60] A. Crane, *op. cit.*

[61] P.Schreiner, E. Banev, S. Oxley, Holistic Education Resource Book, New York, Waxmann, 2009

[62] A. Bhattacharya, Paulo Freire: Rousseau of the Twentieth Century, Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, 2011

function autonomously from each other. However, in unity these constructs form the praxis.

Here, praxis is understood as "informed action"[63]. It is the process of taking action in practice while acting within a theoretical framework of thought to identify the critical competencies required to be successful in practice and informing the curriculum framework representative of professional development. In this concept, theory and practice are as one because Freire's ground-breaking politics did not distinguish between the importance of thinking differently and the importance of making a concrete change in the world. In praxis, abstract theorising is only useful as long as it informs concrete action. Likewise, deep thinking and justification must inform action[64]. Only in this way did Freire see "the oppressed" finding their own, new way to intellectual and social freedom, rather than simply repeating the mistakes of their "oppressors". This is not a case of "doing" and then "reflecting" on it later. Instead, it is about making sure that every action has an informed basis while every valuable thought is put into action. CSR practitioners responsible for bringing any form of CSR theory into practice could consider their actions when planning, and then again when reflecting or evaluating[65].

CSR practitioners immersed in praxis would bring their theoretical thoughts to every decision as they make these decisions, adapting their actions in the field of CSR practice to ensure they continue to encourage learning and sustainable change for social good. Social and socio-economic change affects CSR practitioners as well as the communities in which they are working and also business in society. It situates the learning as a conversation between the practitioner and key stakeholders, instead of practitioners carrying out their (business) plans, which were crafted in the hypothetical world of being "good in theory" and which makes "good business sense". When designing and developing the CSR practitioner curriculum, these principles should be applied to produce a curriculum that enables critical dialogue, critical thinking, action and reflection.

The learning process should begin with helping the CSR or CSI practitioner to understand the concrete conditions of the communities in

[63] A. Harley, *op. cit.*

[64] A. Harley, "We are Poor, not Stupid, Learning from Autonomous, in B. Hall, D. Clover, J. Crowther, E. Scandrett, E. (ed.), Learning and Education for a Better World, The Role of Social Movements, Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, 2013

[65] G. Gutek, *Philosophical and Ideological Voices in Education, Toronto, Pearson/A & B, 2004.*

which they work[66]. Reflection is a necessary agent, enabling these practitioners to assimilate knowledge in accordance with the needs of business in society and society itself, without becoming an object of the CSR business or stakeholder agenda, but rather a subject of their own learning, experience in society and business in community[67].

4. Conclusion

The main findings of the inquiry, which was based on the findings from the literature and the collection of data through questionnaires, telephone interviews, focus groups and the Delphi exercise, informed the factual findings of this inquiry from which a number of conclusions could be drawn. It appears that CSR and CSI practitioners have different functional titles, which may be limiting the specific job function and professional recognition of CSR practitioners. CSR in South Africa is aptly titled corporate social investment (CSI) because of the historical backdrop of social and political development in South Africa. In surveys and interviews, respondents and practitioners interchangeably referred to CSR and CSI, but the majority of study participants referred to CSI, which, by definition, is exclusive to social investment and unique to South Africa, thus limiting in terms of all the other dimensions and core drivers of CSR, such as sustainable development.

An additional conclusion, drawn from the expressed need for professional development, is that there appears to be no clearly defined roles or job descriptions for CSR practitioners. This impedes CSR practitioners' ability to identify development areas within their CSR role. This was confirmed by the lack of clearly defined continuous professional development requirements aligned with CSR best practice.

The study has identified clear gaps between the sole CSR practitioner and those who work for corporates as part of a CSR or CSI team. In this context, sole refers to a practitioner who is the only employee in an organisation responsible for the CSR function. This inquiry has shown that there may be a need for two sets of competencies for the professional development of CSR practitioners. The first is to address the needs of the sole CSR practitioner and the second is to address the needs of those CSR practitioners who form part of a bigger CSR team. The CSR practitioner

[66] A. Harley, *op. cit.*

[67] P. Leonard, P. McLaren, Paulo Freire, A Critical Encounter, New York, Taylor & Francis, 2002

who is required to work as a single person in an organisation is also required to think and act on a strategic level, which may involve different cognitive processes than a CSR practitioner who is part of a bigger CSR unit or team and who has to follow instructions. The study has thus shown that there may be a need for a differentiated approach to CSR curriculum design and development to address the needs of the singular CSR practitioner.

What has also emerged from the study is that any proposed CSR curriculum framework is to be underpinned by a competency framework which illustrates interconnectivity between skills, knowledge, behaviours and the concept of applied competencies[68,69,70,71,72]. These are to be linked to the work of the NQF and the ten NQF level descriptor categories. It has further transpired, from a theoretical perspective, that the concept of applied competence, by definition, may be a necessary option to ensure that any CSR competency framework remains future-focused and that the attainment of the CSR competencies is not based on foundational knowledge only. Instead, the CSR competency framework must be sufficiently robust to be used in real-world, complex and transdisciplinary CSR situations.

From the empirical data generated from different stakeholders, the need for a best practice CSR framework became evident. It has emerged that CSR practitioners (CSR practitioners, CSR managers and CSR academics) refer to two concepts: benchmarking to assess and measure performance against industry standards, and CSR best practice frameworks to help guide entry-level to mid-career CSR practitioners to learn and develop skills that comply with set industry standards. It has also become clear

[68] D. Bartram, The great eight competencies, A criterion-centric approach to validation, in Journal of Applied Psychology, 2005, vol. 90, n. 6, 1185-1203.

[69] R. Kurz, D. Bartram, Competency and individual performance, Modeling the world of work, in I. T. Robertson, M. Callinan, D. Bartram (ed.), Organizational effectiveness, The role of psychology, Chichester, Wiley, 2002, 227-225

[70] South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), Perform support functions for corporate social investment programmes, 2010, http://www.saqa.co.za (accessed March 10, 2013)

[71] South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), Publication of the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework and Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework of the National Qualifications Framework, in SAQA, 2013, vol. 549, Pretoria, Government Printing Works

[72] South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), Nation Qualifications Framework: Sub-Frameworks and Qualification Types, 2014, http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/brochures/2014/NQF%20Level%20Desciptors.jpg.pdf (accessed November 17, 2014

that there is no agreement on what constitutes a CSR best practice framework for inclusion in the CSR curriculum framework. Further analysis and interpretation of qualitative data showed that a CSR best practice framework might consist of a series of complex and interconnected frameworks to guide and inform actions and decisions related to CSR best practice.

These frameworks may include sensitivity to communication requirements, national and international legislation, monitoring and evaluation, reporting, stakeholder management, community engagement, employee voluntary situations, strategic business management, strategic networking, socio-economic transformation and CSR project or programme management. Of the range of available "frameworks" or international standards, the ISO 26000 is the only framework recognised as a global standard that could be contextualised from a South African perspective and operationalised at an organisational level.

This presents the findings of a journey to produce new insights into the development of a CSR curriculum framework that may be utilised as a tool to guide curriculum designers, developers and policy makers to address the professional development needs of CSR practitioners. This study has developed and validated a well-informed conceptual CSR curriculum framework, not only defining the skills, knowledge and behavioural components for successful CSR practitioners, but also identifying the priority competencies to inform the development of a CSR curriculum for the professional development of CSR practitioners. The researcher anticipates, based on provisional feedback from CSR thought leaders, that the CSR curriculum framework may pave the way for engagement that is more meaningful and for debate on the development of a national qualification for CSR practitioners.

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