

Evolution of the Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility

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Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has a long history dating back many centuries. It is commonly argued that CSR involving many activities including, economic, social, ethical and philanthropic. These elements have been evaluated by CSR researchers to expand their understandings in the contexts of both developed and developing countries. Still, there is no accepted definition of CSR, or identification of the standards and codes of conduct proceeded to study the concept with certainty. Therefore, the different CSR models offered in the literature are still under debate.

The purpose of this study is to help to define the CSR concept in relation to the future development of CSR in developing countries by looking at the evolution of CSR in the developed world based on selected scholarly articles. This study identifies the different CSR themes including economic, social, ethical and environmental issues, to compile a historical background of CSR. Exploratory studies are used to examine the evolution of CSR relating to on developed and developing countries, using a content analysis research technique to organise the data.

To sum up, since the 1950s, economic and social perspectives have been considered as the most important themes in CSR. In the 1980s, the stakeholder theme was adopted in CRS discussions and since then, the CSR concept has been discussed in many ways in the developed world. In the late 1990s the CSR concept was adopted by many countries in the world by both scholars and top management of organisations. The major limitation of this study is that the practise of CSR is still in its foundation stages in developing countries. Furthermore, no other scholarly research has as yet been undertaken in the comparing CSR activities in developed countries with those in developing countries.

Key words: Corporate Social Responsibility, Themes, Economic, Social, Ethical, Environmental

Introduction

There is indisputably a large difference between industrialised countries and developing countries of the socially, economically and environmentally. Organisations are more concerned about the development of these three areas under the cultural and national identity. They are not only the concern for securing business profits and development but also a concern for securing positive development of the country. They believe the growth of the country based on the development of employees, society, shareholders, customers and the environmental factors of the organisations. These external and internal factors are most important to maximise the company's profit and the shareholder value. The concept of the CSR is the important factor to achieve the company's objective and the development of these three bottom lines.

The study is highlighted the four areas including why the organisations consider the CSR to implement in their organisations, history of the CSR, evolution of CSR in developed and the developing countries and how this concept is affected to the growth of the country.

1. Why organisations have become interested in CSR?

The organisations are developed CSR notions in their firms because of the two reasons such as internal reasons and external reasons. Wood (1991) defined the organisations have three specific areas such as institutional, organisational and individual. Under these areas CSR notions are identified in different manner by the scholars. First, under the individual level, managers' *personal values* strongly influence to the CSR policies of the organisation, Hemingway and MacLagan (2004). Second, under the organisational level of CSR, influencing of *directorial type, the public relations functions, and particularly financial resources and performance*, (Heath and Ryan 1989; Levy and Shatto 1978; Miles 1987; Pinkston and Carroll 1996; Pinkston and Carroll 1994). On the institutional level, it is highlighted that *the company's industry sector influences the attitudes and behaviours associated with CSR* (Bhambri and Sonnenfeld 1988; Lerner and Fryxell 1988).

It is argued that the *external pressures* are the important factor to identify the notion of CSR (L'Etang 1994; Vogel 2005). *Industry specific issues and public visibility* are playing a major role for development of CSR. The *activities* of the companies' are highly affected to the *environment* which is pressured as external and emphasised the environmental preservation is more than others. *Social developments* are the next factor to force businesses to evolve their notion of CSR (Carroll 1999; Zadek and Simon 2006). Such pressure is said to increase when codified by legislation (O'Dwyer 2003; Pinkston and Carroll 1994).

It was answered by Musah (2008) that why organisations engage in CSR using the practical and the empirical studies from the literature in CSR. He explained that the academics need to development of the CSR concepts and the existing theories, such as profit maximising theory, stakeholder theory, and social contract theory. Business organisations are looking at the CSR notion because of the following factors (Musah, 2008).

- Increasing public demands on business leaders to include social issues as part of their strategies as in the social and political business climate (Lantos 2001; Lantos 2002).
- Managers have demands from various stakeholders groups to devote resources to CSR. Such pressures originates from constituencies as employees, consumers, communities and development (McWilliams and Siegel 2001).
- Employee pressures: increasing public recognition of certain employee rights in the workplace, including non-discrimination in hiring, firing and promotion.
- Consumer pressures include production of safe products and greater amount of consumers' information.
- Community and environmental pressure include that the organisations are not invested or not consideration about the environmental pollution and ensuring that the business operations do not threaten the safety of local community. External pressures come from powerful stakeholders to adopt an ethics programme in the organisations otherwise they threaten to discontinue their

support to the organisations if the issue would not do so (Frooman 1999).

Moreover, Smith (2003) explained the *reputational risk in consumer markets*, is the important factor to implement social responsibilities to the organisations. The meaning of the reputational risk is the firm's future existence and growth which can be affected by the activities of the some pressure groups of the external environment. Example; boycotts are one manifestation of this pressure. Consumer boycott, multi country boycott are the danger to the company.

Campbell (2007) has highlighted that the firm's behaviour of the CSR will change different things in different places to different people and at different times, therefore it is careful in how concept of CSR is used and how it is defined.

Fernando (2007) stated that the Sri Lankan organisations are manifested their CSR for popularity in the society. This is the one important reason in the Asian CSR development.

Aguilera R, Williams & Ganapathi (2007) provided the multilevel theoretical model to understand why business organisations are increasingly engaging in CSR initiatives. According to their model that organisations are pressured to engage in CSR by many different factors such as employees, stakeholders, governments and NGOs.

Carroll and Shabana (2010) mentioned that arguments in favour of CSR of the organisations as many reasons. The first reason is, if the business is to have a healthy climate in their future; it is good to take actions now that will ensure its long term viability. Second argument is, if the organisation already acts CSR now, then the future government actions, rules and regulations would not needed to consider. Thirdly, they stated that proactive is better than the reactive. Example, if there is a plan for CSR it will help to implement quickly when it is needed. Otherwise the organisation might costly and time taken. Fourth idea of the CSR is the public interest and support to implement it in the organisations. The next reason is business has

resources, management skills, functional experts and capital. They can use these as for the social responsibilities.

2. History of CSR

History of CSR runs far from the many years. Many CSR research studies have identified the history of the CSR since 1776 and believed the modern CSR is started from since 1950s. The evolution of CSR has been discussed by the various studies since 19th century. The CSR concept is mainly concerned about the social and environmental protection (Gray, et al. 2001). Also, this is not a new issue, as the origins of this began many centuries ago. For example, in Ancient Mesopotamia around 1700 BC, King Hammurabi introduced a code in which builders, innkeepers and farmers were put to death if their negligence caused the deaths of others, or major inconvenience to local citizens (BRASS Centre 2007). Corporate leaders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century used their wealth to support philanthropic ventures; with communities looking to how these leaders were contributing to society through the companies they supported (Lockett, et al. 2006a; Wolfe 2002).

The historical evolution of CSR is developed in this section basing on many CSR themes such as **economic, legal, social, ethical, and stakeholders** perspectives. These themes have been identified by many CSR scholars (Lockett, et al. 2006b; Visser 2006) in their studies and discussed based on the developed and developing countries CSR studies. Basically, CSR history has been developed on economic and social perspectives. Also ethical and stakeholders theory is discussed under this evolution, in addition the CSR codes and principles, standards and laws have pointed out here as the CSR development.

Some argue that CSR began with economics development. The classical view of CSR, based on neoclassical economic theory, Branco and Rodriques (2007) defines it in purely economic profit making terms, focusing on the profit of the shareholders. For example, Adam Smith was an eighteenth century Scottish moral philosopher who wrote "*The Wealth of the Nation*" in 1776 cited in (Smith 1986) and a pioneer of political economics. In the same year

Adam Smith has published a book, in "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations," expressed that the needs and desires of society could best be met by the free interaction of individuals and organizations in the marketplace, but with no consideration given to addressing CSR (Smith 1776). As these concepts developed, by the mid 1900s they had become generalised throughout the business world (Mohammed 2007).

Milton Friedman, an American economist, wrote in his famous 1970's article "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits" in The New York Times Magazine, that "the one and only social responsibility of business, is to increase profits for shareholders". By this time, the concept of CSR had been completely subvert to this economic notion (Carroll 1979). However, with industrialisation, the impacts of business on society and the environment assumed an entirely new dimension (Hopkins 2000). Both authors, Friedman (1970) and Smith (1776), had laid the foundation for business responsibility, it was only in the 1950s that people began to realise the need for sustainable business growth through introducing the principles of CSR. At this time consideration was being given towards the actions taken by organisations, and not by their individual leaders (Pohle and Hittner 2008). The view the both consumers and business owners recognize that ignoring environmental and social issues can be bad for business was being upheld. As well, it was seen that companies pollute their local communities risk harming their customers' health and ill-treating workers, risking union backlash and training costs. In these situations in business responsibilities are extended well beyond their economic roles (Bilson 2010).

3. Economic perspective on CSR

The following CSR studies have discussed the evolution of the CSR base on economic perspectives. In 1960, Keith Davis, stated that social responsibility was a vague idea because it was not accepted definition. However, Keith explained that the CSR idea needs to be discussed in the management context. He further noted that the social responsibility activities bring the long term economic gain to the

organisation (Davis 1960, p. 70). His idea was more concerned the later CSR scholars. However, Davis' CSR idea was commonly accepted in 1970s onwards.

The accepted example of economic development on CSR is Milton Friedman in 1970 presented his view for CRS as the management's fundamental goal is to increase value for its shareholders. However, the shareholders thought the concept is a cost concept in short run but the benefits goes to the both company and the wider society in the long run (Friedman 1970; Young and O'Byrne 2000). Under these circumstances, the investors do not like to continue the CSR concept, because the organisation makes losses in the short run (Bilson 2010). Therefore this is affected to the managers constantly to maximize profits whilst theoretically being socially responsible.

As well, Harold Johnson (1971) presented many different views for CSR. One of his CSR definitions is related to the *economic perspective* that was profit maximisation. Accordingly;

"social responsibility states that businesses carry out social programs to add profits to their organisation" (Johnson 1971, p. 54).

In order to understand the Johnson's (1971) above view, economic perspective of CSR, the well-known CSR author Carroll, in 1979, presented four part CSR definition that was embedded in a conceptual model of Corporate Social Performance (CSP). His definition involved that the business has a responsibility to produce goods and services for the people's satisfaction, and to sell them with a profit margin. Carroll (1999) argued about his economic responsibility is a must do by the organisation and stated economic viability is something business does for society as well.

Agreeing with Carroll's (1991), Visser (2006) pointed out that the first and foremost responsibility of the developing countries was economic responsibility. He further revealed that Carroll's other three responsibilities such as legal, ethical and discretionary, are changed

in the places of his pyramid but economic responsibility still is the same place in CSR.

The economic perspective of CSR has come forward in 1980s period, looking at the new approach in CSR studies that was identifying the relationship with CSR and profitability of the companies (Aupperle, et al. 1985; Cochran and Wood 1985). These research studies are shown that the firms profit might be increased or decreased when they implement the CSR (Cochran and Wood 1985). Carroll (1979) pointed out; this approach is an added argument in support of the CSR movement.

In addition to the economic argument, academics began to debate that CSR was a necessity for sustainability. In 1953, the one of the publications of the CSR was named as "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman" (Bowen, 1953), defined CSR as "businessmen's obligation to pursue those policies, to make those decisions or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of society" (Bowen, 1953) in (Maignan and Ferrell 2000, p.4). Because of his early seminal work, the scholars (Carroll 1999; Windsor 2001) have credited Howard Bowen with the title the "father of CSR".

In consisting with Bowen's introduction of CSR, a number of studies played a role in developing the social responsibility concept: (Carroll 1979; Carroll 1999; Carroll 1991; Jones 1980; Waddock and Graves 1997; Wartick and Cochran 1985; Wood 1991). The important contribution was developing a CSR model which was suitable for practise in the USA, Europe and the rest of the Western world.

4. Community perspectives of CSR

Many CSR studies have discussed about the social activities are the major responsibilities in CSR. During the 1920s American companies were started to involve their reaching out to the community and facilitating benefits to their employees. McGuire (1963) explained that the social responsibility has more responsibilities rather than economic and legal (p.144). He elaborated the corporation must take

interest in politics, welfare to community, in education, happiness of its employees. He first introduced the social activities of the organisation, and the business organisations should be acted as the citizens (p.144). Carroll (1999) described the McGuire's (1963) citizenship concept which has been opened firstly to the business ethics and corporate citizenship areas.

As well, in 1930s organisations have established some activities relating to their employees such as pension plans, employee stock ownership and life insurance schemes, unemployment funds, limitations on hours, and high wages (Mohammed 2007). Further, those organisations started to built houses, churches, schools, libraries, providing medical facilities, consulting services for legal affairs, and gave charity to their communities as social welfare (Mitchell, 1989) cited in (Mohammed 2007). These activities are developed in US organisations as philanthropic activities, on CSR work.

In 1975, Preston and Post, stated that more suitable word for social responsibility is public responsibility, because "to stress the importance of the public policy process, rather than individual opinion and conscience, as the source of goals and appraisal criteria" (Preston & Post 1975 p.102). They stated that the scope of the managerial public responsibility is limited under the CSR concept. However, their view is not thoroughly recognised the CSR literature and suggested that it has unlimited scope. (Jones 1980) highlighted the Preston and Post (1975) argument and he pointed out that the public responsibility should be more developed because of the CSR is vagueness. He stated that CSR was not addressed the all the issues related to CSR.

In the same period, Fitch (1976) suggested that the CSR is try to solve the social problems caused wholly or partly by the organisation (p.38). Under this problem solving perspective, it is needed to define the social problem of the organisation, then arrangement it systematically order and decide which ones to attack first. On this

perspective, it is identified the distinction between social and non-social problems and deciding the problem solving process.

On this social theme, Carroll (1979) suggested that the ethical and discretionary responsibilities as social responsibilities. These two responsibilities are extended beyond obedience to the law. He stated that ethical responsibility means "the kinds of behaviours and ethical norms that society expects business to follow. These extend to behaviours and practices that are beyond what is required by the law" (Carroll 1979). However, he explained that the organisations are done these ethical and discretionary responsibilities in voluntary basis. The specific activities are decided by the organisation according to the ethical sense as business strategies. Carroll (1991) stated some examples for these voluntary base activities as philanthropic contributions, conducting in house programs for drug abusers, training the hard-core unemployed, facilitating day care centres for the employees children, in house program for drug users, training the hard-core unemployed (p.284).

Thus, another way to consider the social responsibilities of business is to look at those affected by the business decisions, namely the stakeholders (Jones 1980). As well, Freeman (1984) defined the term stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives" (p.46). According to the Jones (1980) that he defined the CSR relating with these interesting parties as :

"CSR is the notion that corporations have an obligation to constituent groups in society other than stockholders and beyond that prescribed by law and union contract. Two facets of these definitions are critical. First, the obligation must be voluntary adopted behaviour influenced by the coercive forces of law or union contract is not voluntary. Second, the obligation is a broad one, extending beyond the traditional duty to shareholders to other societal groups such as customers, employees, suppliers, and neighbouring communities" (pp. 59-60).

Freeman (1998) argued the stakeholders are "groups and individuals who benefit from or are harmed by, and whose rights are violated or respected by, corporate actions" (Freeman, 1998, p. 174). He noted the decision makers of the firms (managers) should consider the shareholders as well as the stakeholders who are affected by business decisions. In addition to shareholders, stakeholders include creditors, employees, customers, suppliers, and the communities at large. In contrast to the classical view, the stakeholder view holds that "the goal of any company is or should be the successful of the company and all its principal stakeholders" (Werhane and Freeman, 1999, p. 8).

The "stakeholder view", based on stakeholder theory, holds that companies have a social responsibility which requires them to consider the interests of all parties affected by their actions. As well, Hay and Gray (1977) have described that the early twentieth century the development of CSR as trusteeship when the corporation recognised that multiple groups such as employees, customers, stockholders, and creditors held competing claims. A corporate manager became a trustee for more than just the owner's concerns when making decisions for the corporation. Diffusion of corporate ownership through stock contributed to this situation as no single owner or even small group of owners controlled the corporation. Multiple stakeholders such as unions and government had impacted on corporations and influenced the corporation to address demands of multiple groups. This was partly influenced by the Christian notion of brotherhood in society.

In 1960s and 1970s, United States organisations are more concerned about the consumer and environmental protection activities. This period of increasing is efforts to regulate corporate activity. Until 1970s, the organisations are listened only for their shareholders views, ignored the criticism of the corporate activities. In other words the organisations are done only shareholders responsibilities. However, this was changed late 1960s, this period of enlightenment for many. Stakeholders, specially, consumers and people understood the quality of the products, human rights, and natural resources of the

country, thus they argued with organisation of their rights. In the 1970s US corporations as a business form of organisation developed rapidly, taken a commercial view point that spelled out CSR duties and responsibilities of the top management to their shareholders. This is another new research idea has been performed by Kuhn and Shriver (1991) in their book *Beyond Success* some of the managerial metaphors, pointing out that early 1900s CSR came to the organisation from outside the corporation in the form of unions. They stated that the earlier the unions are considered by the managers and the courts as third party outsiders who endangered corporate property. Presently this view has been changed; employees are now viewed as internal voices of the corporation. The union efforts of rational and mining employees to criticise and change co-operate policy. Even in its earliest form CSR had the dual character of originating both from inside and outside the corporation

The next CSR development is identified by the various scholars as mandatory perspective. This has been recognised as the development of CSR in some developed countries. As well, the organisations are addressed specific social domains including health and safety for their employees, consumer protection, labour practices, environmental protection (Jenkins 2005). However, organisations are restricted to social responsibilities because of the law and public policy. As well, they responded voluntarily to market demands that reflected consumer moral values and social tastes. As a result, the nations, including US, Europe, Norway, German and Canada, emerged and continued this concept to be a key management, accounting and marketing field. Therefore, by the midpoint of the twentieth century, US and Europe are discussed this concept by business management experts and being considered in business literature (Mohammed 2007). Furthermore, in Europe, forceful regulatory action established to implement the CSR. Not only Europe, Wilford (2005) found that North America, was established the CSR policies consistently higher than US. This is vast different from the more voluntary firms of CSR favored in the US.

In line with the developed countries, the developing world also increased efforts to regulate the activities of foreign investors. In the period from 1960s to 1970s the United Nations established the codes of conduct for the activity of transnational corporations. These codes of conduct are used by the developing countries' government to regulate transnational corporations at the national level. They emerged from a perception that the growth of giant international companies posed a threat to the sovereignty of small, poor states and represented an attempt to redress the balance between the growing power of transnational corporations and the vulnerable nation state, particularly in the southern hemisphere (Europe and America) resisted global attempts at mandatory regulation of transnational corporation activities, proposing self regulation as an alternative (Jenkins 2001).

Multinational Companies (MNCs) have already had a tremendous impact on foreign countries, and this impact will continue to grow and bring about long lasting changes. These corporations also often have subsidiaries in the third world countries and people disagree whether this has a positive effect on developing countries or not. the MNCs need to respect the countries law, culture and development needs. In order to do this there is a need for ethical and social responsibility from the corporation working in the host country (Brytting, 1997) cited in (Normark, et al. 2006). The concept of CSR is based on the recognition that businesses are part of the society and that they have the potential to make a positive contribution to societal goals and aspirations. Especially in developing countries (Twose and Rao, 2003).

This philosophy of social responsibility must have its roots somewhere. The strong influence of religion on American society at the time followed by the practices moral values and philosophy by individual prompted these notions of social responsibility within the corporate sector (Mitchell, 1989) in (Mohammed 2007). Thus, since the 1930s and increasingly since the 1960s, social responsibility has become an important issue not only for business but also the theory and practice of law, politics and economics. Merrick Dodd of Harvard

Law School and Adolf Berle of Columbia Law School debated the issue of corporate trusteeship in the early 1930s, where Dodd argued that corporations served a social service, as well as a profit making function, a view rejected by Berle cited in (Hopkins 2007). This argument simmered for the next five decades before it once again sprang into prominence in the 1980s in the wake of the frenzied atmosphere of numerous hostile takeovers.

5. Conclusion

Considering all the themes above, the study considered the following three CSR definitions which were developed by World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD 2000), Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) and European Union (EU), are taken to make out the present CSR in the academic field.

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development has incorporated many of these perspectives and defined CSR as ;

“The continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large” (p. 3).

As well, the European Union has defined the CSR as;

“a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis” (www.eutrade.org).

Also, Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) has defined the CSR as;

“CSR is about companies achieving commercial success in ways that honour ethical values and respect people, communities and natural environment” (www.bsr.org/AdvisoryServices/CSR.cfm).

The above three definitions articulate two common fundamental nature of CSR (Prayukvong and Olsen 2009). Accordingly, businesses are advocated to show concern and take actions and

responsibilities to society and environment, and businesses should integrate environmental and social implications into their day today business operations. In summary, CSR is integrated into three areas (often referred to as triple bottom line): namely people (society), planet (environment) and profit (economics) (Agarwal 2008; Prayukvong and Olsen 2009).

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