

Chapter 13

Discourses of the Different Stakeholders About Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Toivo Niskanen

Abstract The purpose of this study was to examine the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as viewed by different participants in the Finnish labour market. One senior specialist from each of the Confederation of Finnish Industries, the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions SAK and the Finnish Consumers' Association was requested to complete an online questionnaire. The aim of this study was to elucidate how the different participants view various aspects of CSR. Further study aims were to gather the kinds of the responses to the research questions which could be used as a reference base for future development. The main research question was: How does CSR become the best practice in business activities? The sub-questions were: How does CSR come to represent the best practices in the day-to-day activities of (1) business strategy of companies, (2) financiers and shareholders, (3) customers and consumers, (4) employees of the companies and (5) communities and authorities? CSR is a strategic process of mutual commitment between a corporation and its stakeholders. Its purpose is to create a social contract to maximize the welfare of all partners concerned. CSR is also an important way to stimulate proactive behaviour and to improve to health, environment and safety strategies of the companies. CSR provides a company with the ability to recognize and respond effectively to social challenges.

Keywords Corporate social responsibility • CSR • Sustainability • Environment • Safety • Discourse analysis

T. Niskanen (✉)

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Occupational Safety and Health Department,
Legal Unit, P.O. Box 33, FI-00023 Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: toivo.niskanen@stm.fi

1 Introduction

This study of current corporate social responsibility (CSR) consists of perceived responsibilities of CSR and how these are associated with various types of CSR practices, the drivers and motivators that influence decisions to engage in such practices, and the underlying relationship between business and society that is being increasingly emphasized. Defining CSR is challenging, as there are many, sometimes conflicting definitions that attempt to explain its governing concept(s) using normative social constructions that can vary across cultures, etc. Most definitions of CSR describe it as constituting actions whereby companies integrate societal concerns into their business policies and operations. Wood (1991) presents an integrated definition of CSR as the configuration of the principles of social responsibility, processes of social responsiveness, and policies, programmes, and observable outcomes as they relate to the firm's societal relationships. Briefly, a firm committed to CSR has principles and processes in order to minimize its negative impacts and maximize its positive impacts on societal at all or on selected groups (Wood 1991). The European Union (European Parliament Resolution 2006) defines CSR as a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with stakeholders on a voluntary basis. CSR from the managerial perspective can lead to a better balancing of corporate objectives and societal risks; from the regulatory perspective, it offers the prospect of reflexive types of regulation; and from the financial perspective, it holds out the possibility of new types of deliberation, based around shareholder engagement with companies (Deakin and Hobbs 2007).

There are many viewpoints, however, as to whom or what constitutes a stakeholder and whether or not they should even be considered in the decisions of the corporation. Furthermore, there are also many potential stakeholders, including individuals and groups in the workplace (employees), the marketplace (customers, suppliers), government, and the community; as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with very specific interests such as the environment, ethics and human rights (Moir 2001). The idea of addressing any perceived responsibilities to stakeholder(s) other than shareholders by engaging in CSR-type activities is viewed by some as a violation of free-market principles. For instance, Milton Friedman (1970) wrote an opinion piece in the *New York Times* that focused on debunking the validity of companies engaging in anything other than strategies that will increase their profits. According to Friedman, businesses and markets are amoral, and as a result should not venture into what he considered social policy. He surmises that issues of morality should be dealt with in the political realm. As far as the market and businesses are concerned, as long as everyone is operating in their own best interest, free of coercion, and with access to full information, the benefits will balance. A number of responsibilities are identified in the literature include the following examples by Moir (2001): (1) Treat employees fairly and equitably; (2) Operate ethically and with integrity; (3) Respect basic human rights; (4) Sustain the environment for future generations; and (5) Be a caring neighbour in their communities.

Finland's national strategy for sustainable development was adopted in June 2006 by the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development. One of the ultimate aims is to consider the impacts of sustainable development in an integrative way and, consequently, to encourage the creation of the potential win-win-win opportunities for developing a sustainable society. The approach is already referred to as the 'Finnish model', in which broad-based, multi-stakeholder participation is combined with ministerial-level political leadership. According to the Finnish strategy, success in a changing world requires that Finland will develop further as a knowledge and innovation-based society which promotes the utilization and development of national strengths: education and know-how, technology, good governance, equality and a high level of environmental protection. This strategy and the policies aimed at sustainable development particularly strengthen the innovation process and empower citizens to take a strong role in developing society (Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development 2006).

The Finnish innovation system is a broad-based collective that is formed by producers and utilizers of new knowledge and expertise as well as the interactive relationships between these two participants. A wide range of policies—originating from EU, national and local levels—have to be fine-tuned to support innovation. Business activities, education, R&D operations, a knowledgeable workforce and funding are all key components of this innovation system (Confederation of Finnish Industries EK 2014b). Universal social protection and extensive welfare services represent the foundation stones constitute of the Finnish welfare society. The Confederation of Finnish Industries EK is the leading business organization in Finland. It represents the entire private sector, both manufacturing industry and service sectors, and companies of all sizes. EK's member companies account for more than 70 % of Finland's gross domestic product and over 95 % of Finnish exports. There are many challenges which can be grouped under the umbrella of CSR e.g. as follows: (1) global competitiveness, (2) developing responsible practices throughout the whole supply chain, (3) well-being and skill base of personnel of the companies, (4) health and safety, (5) combating climate change, (6) eco-efficient use of raw materials and (7) cooperation with main stakeholders (Confederation of Finnish Industries EK 2014c).

The Finnish labour market system is characterized by prominence of labour market organizations not only within the labour market itself, but wider throughout society, since there has been extensive tripartite cooperation between the national government and these social partners (employers and trade unions). The regulation of the labour market in Finland is based on labour legislation primarily on collective agreements. Any trade union and employers' association may make collective agreement. The Finnish main employers' organization has stated that the challenges to the national economy in the long term relate to the ageing population and the availability of skilled labour (Confederation of Finnish Industries EK 2014a). Both employees and employers in Finland are highly organized. This high level of organization makes it possible for national employer and labour confederations to negotiate very broad collective agreements, which then serve as guidelines for collective bargaining by individual industrial trade unions and employers' federations.

The national government also consults the trade unions and the employers over any proposed amendments to the laws that affect working life. The rights of employees working in Finland are guaranteed by law and by collective agreements negotiated by the trade unions on behalf of employee groups (Finnish Trade Union Movement 2014).

For example, the goal of the strategy of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Finnish Strategy 2011, p. 3) is to achieve a socially sustainable society in which individuals are treated equally, everyone has the opportunity to participate, and everyone's health and functional capacity is supported. Since monitoring may be considered a form of direction, its predictive role must be enhanced (Finnish Strategy 2011, p. 16). There are three strategic choices concerned with OSH: (1) A firm foundation for welfare; (2) Access to welfare for all; and (3) A healthy and safe living environment. In the Finnish Strategy (2011, pp. 6–7), the shift of the focus is moving from treating the sick to actively promoting well-being with the overall aim being to lengthen working careers by an average of 3 years by 2020. The attractiveness of working life must be increased by improving working conditions and well-being at work. The improvement in working conditions must be achieved through joint efforts by management and personnel. The risk of permanent working incapacity must be reduced by promoting health and work ability, by improving working conditions and by enhancing OHC (Finnish Strategy 2011, p. 8).

2 The Aim of the Study and the Research Questions

The aim of this research was to study what kind of view different industrial stakeholders have on CSR. A further aim of the study was to collect material to serve as a reference for a future project being developed to examine this topic.

The main research question is: How does the CSR become the best practice in business activities?

The sub-questions for this research are as follows: How does the CSR become the best practices in the day-to-day activities of (1) business strategy of companies, (2) financiers and shareholders, (3) customers and consumers, (4) employees of the companies and (5) communities and authorities?

3 Literature Review and Practical and Theoretical Framework

3.1 CSR Dimensions in the Tripartite Instruments

When developing their own CSR approaches, businesses are guided by standards and principles derived from ILO, UN and OECD conventions and other legislation which has been adopted at some multilateral level through an intergovernmental process

after consultation with business, labour and other stakeholders (OECD 2005; ILO 2006; United Nations 2007). Codes of conduct are directive statements which provide guidance and prohibit certain kinds of conduct. Some are intended to guide a company's own environmental and social impacts; others focus on the impacts of their suppliers; others may apply to both groups (OECD-ILO 2008, p. 6). Enterprises have to operate in the framework of legislation, regulations and administrative practices in their home countries, and in many cases they need to consider of relevant international agreements, principles, objectives, and standards, to ensure that their activities protect the environment, public health and safety (OECD 2005, p. 41).

The Commission of the European Communities (2002, 2006) has provided some guidelines about CSR. In its Communication published in 2002, the Commission proposes to build its strategy to promote CSR on a number of principles, e.g. ensuring compliance and compatibility with existing international agreements and instruments (e.g. ILO, OECD and UN) for multinational enterprise. In a subsequent Communication (2006), the Commission stated that it is committed to promoting awareness and implementation of these instruments and furthermore, it will work together with other governments and stakeholders to enhance their effectiveness. The European Parliament (EP) Resolution (2006) on CSR makes clear its support for the EU's Eco-Management and Audit Scheme and stresses its scope for developing similar schemes concerning the protection of labour, social and human rights. Furthermore, the EP emphasized that the CSR debate must not be separated from questions of corporate accountability, for example enterprises must consider issues of the social and environmental impact of their business activities, as well as their relations with stakeholders, the protection of minority shareholders' rights and the duties of company directors.

ISO Standard 26000:2010 'Guidance on Social Responsibility' is being focused to help an organization achieve mutual trust with its stakeholders by improving its social responsibility performance. An organization's social responsibility performance may influence: (1) the general reputation of the organization; (2) its ability to recruit and retain a committed workforce and/or members, but also to attract customers, clients or users; (3) the maintenance of their employees' morale and productivity; (4) the views of investors, donors, sponsors and the financial community; and (5) its relationship with government, the media, suppliers, peers, customers and the community in which it operates. To assess its social responsibility, an organization needs to consider the following core issues: (1) organizational governance; (2) human rights; (3) labour practices; (4) the environment; (5) fair operating practices; (6) consumer issues; and (7) contribution to the community and society (ISO 26000:2010).

3.2 The Framework of the Study

In a world of complexity and change, managers are asked to tackle a much greater diversity of CSR problems. They have to continue to ensure that organizational CSR processes are efficient and that they are served by the latest developments in

technology (applied from Jackson 2003). Jackson (2003) stated that with increasing complexity, change and diversity, managers have inevitably sought the receive help of the following: scenario planning; benchmarking; value chain analysis; continuous improvement; total quality management; learning organizations; process re-engineering; and knowledge management.

Senge (1994) regards system dynamics, presented as ‘the fifth discipline’, as the most important tool that organizations must master on the route to becoming ‘learning organizations’. Only system dynamics can reveal the systemic structures that govern their behaviour. Nevertheless, it is essential to support study of the fifth discipline with research on the other four disciplines seen as significant in the creation of learning organizations. These are ‘personal mastery’, ‘managing mental models’, ‘building shared vision’ and ‘team learning’.

French (1993, pp. 228–235) concludes that a company has an identity equivalent, in a moral sense, it can be considered as the equivalent of an individual being and thus it has its own ethical responsibility. Similarly, Freeman and Liedtka (1997, pp. 286–296) emphasized that a company must assume ethical responsibilities for all those individuals and groups with which the company operations impact. Carroll (2000a, b) defines the model of the company’s responsibilities to be the implementation of philanthropy, ethical, legal and economic responsibilities. In this model, philanthropy is the desired objective, ethics is the expected target, and legality and economic goals are the required business objectives. The other scholars (e.g. Velasques 1992, p. 16; Cavanagh et al. 1995, p. 198) on business ethics have come to similar conclusions when they have reviewed a company’s interaction with its surrounding society.

Freeman and Liedtka (1997, pp. 286–296) state that a company’s social role is to use the available resources as efficiently as possible. The principles can also be applied to the different dimensions of the business, e.g. competitiveness, leadership, the responsibility of the multinational company and the business responsibilities in the society. In this respect, CSR is an element which impacts on company’s financial results and has to be targeted to the entire chain of supply.

Elkington (2001) considered that the multidimensional parameters were important in CSR. In this sense, several dimensions can be considered to have the widest impact, e.g. economic well-being, environmental management and social justice. Furthermore, when social responsibility has been integrated into the everyday business routines it achieves beneficial results, even if the underlying principles are not necessarily clearly appreciated by the organization’s members (e.g. Catusus et al. 1997; Crane 2000). Elkington (2001) also identified the importance of the economic aspect linked to human capital and knowledge capital. However, the environment management pursued by companies has also attracted criticism for being superficial with a tendency to adopt only cosmetic improvements (e.g. Welford 2000, p. 133; Crane 1999) even though environmental values tend to be accorded high importance in annual reports. Furthermore, moral choices have been found to be rated as of rather minor importance even among the most environment sensitive companies (e.g. Bansal and Roth 2000; Crane 2000; Fineman 1996, 1997), and in turn the need to comply with legislation is often found to be the

strongest and most effective motivator in sustainable development (Bansal and Roth 2000).

The term ‘stakeholder’ can be defined broadly by a holistic and interdependent view defining stakeholders as ‘any group or individual who can affect or are affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives’ (Salzmann et al. 2006, p. 3). Thus, the stakeholder concept includes media, trade unions, public authorities, non-governmental organizations, communities, etc. (Freeman and Liedtka 1997). When considering sustainable development and CSR, then the stakeholders’ contributions to companies involve both tangible and intangible resources: shareholders provide capital; employees offer labour; customers have loyalty and a certain willingness to pay; and communities and governments are expected to establish a stable and beneficial regulatory framework, etc. (Salzmann et al. 2006, p. 3) In turn, the inducements for companies are similarly diverse: they can range from a certain return on investment to safe working conditions and high-quality products (Salzmann et al. 2006, p. 3).

Dobers and Wolff (2000) have argued that the holistic business approach will create sustained success for a company if it is successful in balancing stakeholders’ demands and sustainability requirements. Nonetheless, this balancing process is not easy; the management of a business has to be able to deal with value concepts that are conflicting and inherently contain trade-offs (Dobers and Wolff 2000). Furthermore, some stakeholders can have an indirect effect on corporations via other stakeholders. Ramus and Montiel (2005) argue that the institutional environment (e.g. pressures from stakeholders or government) creates incentives for companies to commit to very similar types of environmental policies regardless of the type of industry in which they do business. Salzmann et al. (2006) defined corporate sustainability performance as a configuration of three components: (1) four determinant drivers (issues, stakeholders, managers and company-specific drivers); (2) corporate sustainability management (as a profit-driven corporate response to social and environmental issues); and (3) the resulting outcome, characterized by social and environmental impacts and associated changes in financial performance.

Adapted from ethics described by from Fisher and Lovell (2006, p. 209) to CSR the pressures that work with the many issues tend to do so from one of three perspectives, as reflected in the column on the right-hand side of Fig. 1. These levels are the macro and global and societal level, the corporate and organizational level and the micro and individual level (applied from Fisher and Lovell 2006, p. 209).

3.2.1 Business Strategy of the Companies

CSR stresses the importance of clearly acknowledging economic responsibility, i.e. the long-term financial health of the company represents the fundamental organizing principle of companies (e.g. Salzmann et al. 2005). However, if sustainability is not an explicit part of the strategic business plans of a company, then there is empirical evidence revealing that companies are unlikely to actually implement

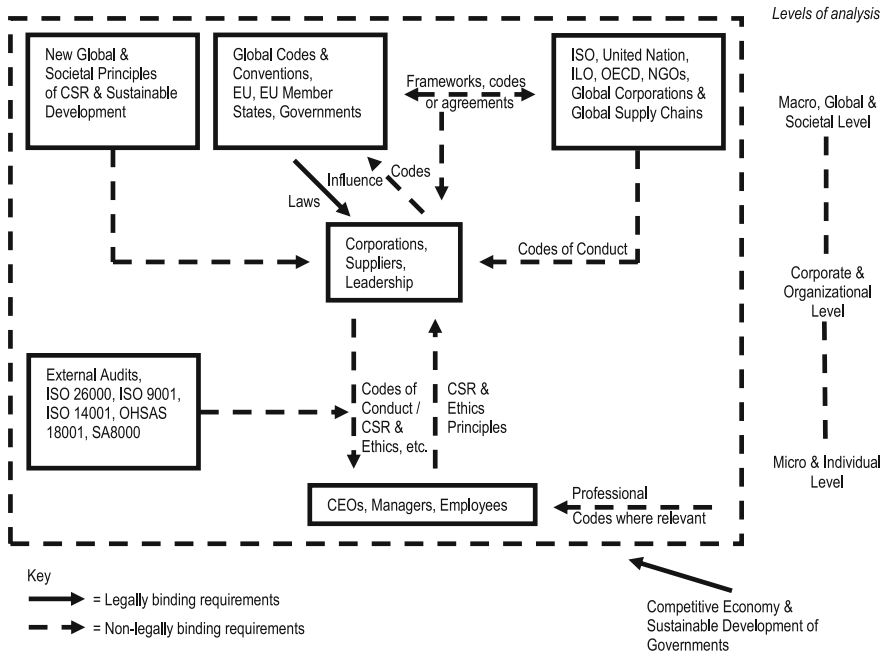


Fig. 1 Formal and informal pressures for CSR (adapted from Fisher and Lovell 2006, p. 207)

sustainability programmes (Ramus 2005; Ramus and Montiel 2005; Ramus and Killmer 2007). The top management defines the appropriate strategic response to a given event in order to save costs, to minimize risk to the company is reputation, to comply with the laws of the country but if possible to gain a competitive advantage (Ramus and Oppegaard 2006, p. 12). For example, not only an organization’s specific field of industry, but also the culture, values, history, management philosophy, top management commitment, control systems and monitoring mechanisms may affect its approach to managing sustainability issues (Ramus and Oppegaard 2007, p. 5).

3.2.2 Financiers and Shareholders

Financial institutions are crucial facilitators for sustainability. Financial actors demand business’ transparency in management systems and it has been predicted that objectives for sustainability will play an important role in the near future (Dobers and Wolff 2000). Steger (2006, p. 4) concluded that nowadays the financial institutions exert a tremendous influence on enterprises and that this applies in particular to the financial mainstream, which is not a strong driver for corporate sustainability. Furthermore, although socially responsible investing and corporate sustainability ratings and indices are becoming publicized, they still have a rather

insignificant overall impact (Steger 2006, p. 4). Financial institutions also assess industries from an environmental point of view; they judge and evaluate environmental risks and thus price companies realistically depending on their liabilities, because the environmental risks taken by companies can have a negative impact on their longer-term shareholder value (Dobers and Wolff 2000). Similarly, Salzmann et al. (2005) concluded that corporate sustainability management manifests itself through corporate social and environmental initiatives undertaken to exploit financial opportunities and to minimize financial risks by mitigating or resolving those issues. Pirson and Malhotra (2008, pp. 11–12) stated that internal stakeholders, such as investors, are most often seeking for evidence of managerial competence: they want to have confidence in the ability of management to effectively control costs and to manage the workforce effectively so that they remain competitive and create financial value.

Orlitzky et al. (2003) conclude that market forces generally do not penalize companies that are high in corporate social performance and thus, managers can afford to be socially responsible. Their results of the meta-analysis revealed a positive association between social/environmental performance (CSP) and corporate financial performance (CFP) across industries and across study contexts. If managers believe that CSP is a prerequisite for CFP, they may actively pursue CSP in the belief that the market will reward them for such efforts. The company's executives and top-leadership must be attentive to the perceptions of third parties, regardless of whether they are market analysts, public interest groups or the media (Orlitzky et al. 2003).

Salzmann et al. (2006, p. 15) have identified a broad range of possible stakeholder impacts, e.g.: (1) impacts resulting in the innovation of processes, products and supply chains and (2) impacts on brand value and reputation and customer loyalty. Similarly, it has been claimed that shareholder value will be best realized if companies include environmental and social responsibility objectives in their value creating statements, processes and products (Dobers and Wolff 2000). Stakeholders of all types are interested in associating with organizations with whom they can identify, and with whom they perceive a match in values (Pirson and Malhotra 2008, p. 17).

In general, adopting a proactive corporate environmental strategy that goes beyond regulatory compliance can have a positive effect on corporate financial performance (e.g. Christmann 2000; Hart 1995; Wagner 2005). The size of the enterprise has a significant effect on the degree of proactiveness, with larger organizations being more likely to adopt proactive environmental practices (Sharma 2000). However, Steger (2006, p. 5) has stated that the economic logic and business advantages of corporate sustainability are not strong enough and that although and assessment of corporate social performance may occur, it is still not a part of the mainstream analyses. Dobers and Wolff (2000) detected a strong trend in that recent strategic assessments have started to include sustainability criteria in addition to the more conventional financial aspects.

3.2.3 Customers and Consumers

The external stakeholders, e.g. customers and suppliers, typically care less about managerial competence but much more about technical competence: the ability to produce goods and services of high quality and to deal effectively with the supply chain (Pirson and Malhotra 2008, pp. 11–12). Furthermore, Dobers and Wolff (2000) evaluated that the concept of ‘environmental awareness’ in society. They indicated that consumers behave according to their ethical values, which would imply that they are more likely to purchase environmentally friendly products when these are available.

Furthermore, Dobers and Wolff (2000) concluded that when looking at segmentation and marketing strategies, there is a strong indication that the ‘green’ consumer differs considerably from other customers. They believed that this means from a business marketing point of view. A company may have to adopt a differentiated marketing strategy (Dobers and Wolff 2000). There is an OECD recommendation that when dealing with consumers, enterprises should act in accordance with fair business, marketing and advertising practices and should take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and quality of the goods or services they provide (OECD 2005, p. 25). Furthermore, Steger (2006, p. 5) indicated that consumer organizations are in some way ‘happy’ that companies (particularly those that have branded goods and are close to the consumer) are making a contribution to societal well-being.

Steger (2006, pp. 5–6) claimed that consumer organizations lack resources because their activities are largely based on their own product-related research. While consumers seem to express positive environmental attitudes, when it comes to their behaviour, the challenges faced by companies are much more ambiguous (Dobers and Wolff 2000). Corporate customers also have a clear business case to ensure that their suppliers are complying with certain social and environmental standards (Steger 2006, p. 6). In contrast, corporate suppliers often do not ‘dare’ to bother their customers with corporate sustainability, unless there is a clear need for product responsibility and risk management, e.g. hazardous chemicals (Steger 2006, p. 6).

3.2.4 Employees of the Companies

Workplace CSR projects can affect many different areas of a company’s human resource policy such as health and safety, the work-life balance of employees, staff diversity and cultural awareness. Many enterprises with a demonstrated capability of developing a shared vision seem to be able to accumulate the skills necessary for developing a proactive environmental strategy much earlier than companies without this kind of shared vision because these strategies depend ‘upon tacit skill development through employee involvement’ (Hart 1995). When the enterprise decides to integrate the environmental issues into the organization, it can exploit certain resources and capabilities developed by the company in its business management

that can be viewed as ‘potential environmental capabilities’ (Clavera et al. 2007; Hart and Ahuja 1996). The corporate environmental strategy places an enterprise’s environmental strategies on a spectrum ranging from reactive strategies to more proactive strategies that includes voluntary eco-efficient practices in environmental leadership strategies. In this latter strategy, the products, processes and even business models are redesigned along the entire product life cycle (Sharma 2000; Sharma and Vredenburg 1998).

3.2.5 Communities and Authorities

Ramus and Montiel (2005) have argued that the institutional environment (e.g. pressures from communities and government) represent incentives for firms to commit to very similar types of environmental policies regardless of the type of industry in which they do business. A central consideration for business organizations must be how well private CSR initiatives reflect and reinforce government agreements on labour, social and environmental standards (OECD-ILO 2008, p. 13). Steger (2006, p. 5) indicated that most communities constantly struggle to maintain employment and that there is strong competition between communities throughout Europe. Local communities and governments are primarily concerned about employment levels and thus regional competitiveness. In this situation, higher social and environmental standards are largely ‘taboo’, and they revert to an enabling approach to corporate sustainability (Steger 2006, p. 5). Enterprises are encouraged to cooperate with local communities and government authorities in the development and implementation of policies. Taking into consideration, the views of other stakeholders in society including the local community and governmental interests can enrich this process (OECD 2005, p. 41). Steger (2006, p. 5) concluded that in light of the weakening bargaining power of the governments (against the major multinationals in particular), they have also tried to target the reputation of companies that have decided to relocate their manufacturing base or lay-off significant numbers of their workforce.

A value-based approach involves open communication and dialogue with NGO associations. The outcomes of this approach can lead to sustainability and active participation by the company in the community (Ramus and Oppegaard 2006, p. 11). Enterprises need to take fully into account established NGO policies in the countries in which they operate, and to consider the views of other stakeholders. In this regard, it is recommended that enterprises should encourage local capacity building through close cooperation with the local community (OECD 2005, p. 25). There are many ways to increase the vitality of rural areas, e.g. by providing support for entrepreneurship, promoting a diverse business structure and utilizing the particular strengths of each region as well as promoting their sense of local community and local culture. Many rural and urban communities are struggling to create sustainable change for themselves—and this challenge is heightened because many of them do not have access to the professional skills needed to help overcome

deprivation and social exclusion (Business in the Community 2008). By working together, businesses and communities can create exciting solutions that will be beneficial to both parties (Business in the Community 2008).

4 Research Methods and Research Materials

4.1 *Constructionism and Discourses*

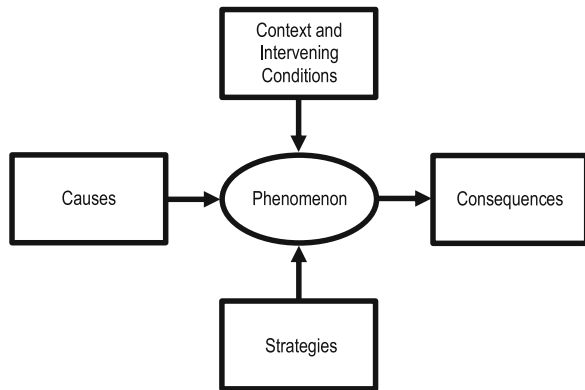
The data from this discourse study were produced in March and April in 2008. It originated from an online questionnaire form which included open-ended theme questions classified in different taxonomies. The material on CSR was answered by the senior specialists from three organizations, the Confederation of Finnish Industries EK, the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions SAK and the Finnish Consumers' Association.

Constructionism starts with the assumption that access to shared dynamic, changing and individually constructed reality only occurs through social constructions such as language and shared meanings in everyday interactions (Lord and Dinh 2012). From this perspective, knowledge is socially constructed: social reality, identities and knowledge are culturally, socially, historically and linguistically influenced. In this method, the social construction approach focuses on relationality (Cunliffe 2008); CSR is being constructed 'in relation to some goal'. The CSR relationships are emergent and co-constructed as an interactive dynamics (applied from Fairhurst and Grant 2010). Here the interests within the processes constitute CSR as the outcome of particular types of relationships and interactions.

Discourse analysis (DA) is a term for a broad area of language study, containing a diversity of approaches with different epistemological roots, and very different methodologies. In general, DA can be defined as a 'set of methods and theories for investigating language in social contexts' (Wetherell et al. 2001; Wetherell 1998). From this perspective, discourse is not 'merely about actions, events and situations, it is also a potent and constitutive part of those actions, events and situations' (Potter 1997, p. 144; Potter 2000, p. 31). DA can be thought of as focusing on the production of versions of reality and cognition as parts of practices in natural settings. DA is concerned with understanding the nature of power and dominance and how discourse contributes to their production (van Dijk 1995, 2001, pp. 421–434; Fairclough 1995, 1996, 2000; Potter 1996). There are four broad sets of research issues which can productively be addressed specifically by discourse analysts in transdisciplinary research on organizational change: the problems of emergence, hegemony, recontextualization and operationalization (Fairclough 2005).

For example, in CSR, these mediating entities are CSR practices, articulations of diverse CSR elements, discourses which constitute CSR selections as concrete entities in particular areas of social strategy. Translation is a concept that captures the process of spread, and explains how micro-level activities contribute to institutional change. Furthermore, even though translations must be understood at a

Fig. 2 The paradigm model (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 127)



local level, they can occur globally and among groups of organizations, thereby contributing to institutional change (Windell 2006, pp. 28–29). Czarniawska and Sevón (1996) introduced translation as a concept to explain how organizational change emerges as management ideas and practices are translated into actions that may eventually be institutionalized in an organization or in larger groups of organizations. Tsoukas and Chia (2002) recognized that the categories and practices which are institutionalized in organizations are inevitably subject to adaptation and change as organizational agents engage in a range of processes and events.

In order to formulate the relationships, Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 127) suggested a coding paradigm model, which is symbolized in Fig. 2.

4.2 Classification of Emergence, Hegemony, Recontextualization and Operationalization

Windell (2006, pp. 28–29) concluded that the translation in CSR can be understood as contributing to institutional change if practices, ideas and objects are replicated and stabilized into institutions. There are four broad sets of research issues which can productively be addressed specifically by CSR discourse in DA research: the problems of emergence, hegemony, recontextualization and operationalization (applied from Fairclough 2003):

- *Emergence* is the process of emergence of new CSR discourses and their constitution. New CSR discourses emerge through ‘reweaving’ relations between existing CSR discourses. These may include ‘external’ discourses existing at the EU, ILO and UN level which become recontextualized with the social partners’ agents.
- *Hegemony* is the process of particular emergent CSR discourses becoming hegemonic in particular social partners’ organizations. The effect of emergent

CSR discourses depends upon whether they are selected for incorporation into the strategies of social partners.

- *Recontextualization* is the dissemination of hegemonic CSR discourses across structural boundaries (e.g. between social partners' organizations) and scalar boundaries (e.g. from CSR international scale to national, or to local). It involves reception and appropriation, working 'international' CSR discourses into relations with 'national' discourses.
- *Operationalization* is the enactment of CSR discourses in new ways. It involves (inter)acting of social partners' discourses and their materialization as practices of the business society.

The 'flow' of CSR discourses across scalar boundaries between 'global' (UN, OECD, ILO), 'international' (e.g. EU) and 'national', is conditional upon how they enter into 'national' social partners' relations.

The construction of ideas in CSR can be understood as activities of translation, in which ideas are objectified into new forms and practices that fit the local institutional context (Windell 2006, p. 41). This research is based upon the theoretical claim that CSR discourses are elements of social partners' business life, and they are dialectically interconnected with other elements, and may have constructive and transformative effects on other elements of the business life. It also claims that CSR discourses have in many ways become more potent as elements of business life.

The discourse classification of RC programmes bases on the Fairclough's (1996, p. 64) constructivism theoretical framework. DA's results do not merely describe the world, they also are expressing, synthesizing and building social identities, relations between human beings and information systems (Fairclough 1996, pp. 64–66). Key assumptions can be summed up as follows: (1) discourses of the company reflect a practical reality, (2) business experts can use a range of discourses, which can be parallel and compete with each other, (3) the practical action is context bound and (4) discourse is built on strategies and policies. Discourse is a dual concept. Firstly, it means the interactive process in which implications are produced. Secondly, it refers to the final outcome of this process.

4.3 Classification with the Actantial Model

In the data analysis of the discursion in the online questionnaire, the actantial model of Greimas (1987, 1990) was applied.

The six actants are divided into three oppositions, each of which forms an axis of the actantial description (Hébert 2011):

- The axis of goal: (1) subject/(2) object. The subject is what is directed towards an object. The relationship established between the subject and the object is called a junction.
- The axis of power: (3) helper/(4) opponent. The helper assists in achieving the desired junction between the subject and object; the opponent hinders this goal.

- The axis of transmission and knowledge: (5) sender/(6) receiver. The sender is the element requesting the establishment of the junction between subject and object. Sender elements are often receiver elements as well.

The core of the actantial model is formed from the subject's intention to acquire the object. Consequently, the subject is the performer of a task, and the object is something that the subject tries to acquire through some activity (Greimas 1987). A sender is a party who gives the task to the subject (Greimas 1987, 1990). At the same time, the sender defines the value targets for the activity, and provides justification and motivation for the subject's activity. A receiver is a party who evaluates whether the subject has succeeded, and confers on the parties to the discourses either a reward or punishment after the task has been completed.

5 Results of the Discourses of the Labour Market Organizations and Stakeholders

5.1 Business Strategy of Companies

It is also essential that the wider impacts and risks are considered when strategic business decisions are made. In CSR, the confidence between the companies and the stakeholders increases and also unexpected effects on the business image may be reduced. Ethical investment offers investors something extra over and above conventional collective investment. An ethical investment is an investment which explicitly seeks to take into account environmental, social and ethical issues. It applies the combination of financial and ethical objectives to the selection of investments.

Figure 3 presents the semiotic actantial model developed by Greimas (1987, 1990) which here is used to link the theory and the discourse data of CSR in relation to the business strategy of the companies.

5.2 Financiers and Shareholders

Emergence: Companies are committed to creating long-term value for their shareholders, recognizing that sustainable profit is essential for the continuity of their business. Companies provide competitive returns on their shareholders' investments. In this respect, they have a responsibility to take due account of the expectations of their investors. A growing number of companies are reporting about their CSR activities. As a result, companies have a variety of new needs in terms of information and performance management, e.g. social reporting, management of human capital, etc. The requirements for CSR data have become progressively more demanding in terms of their degree of transparency, reliability and their ability

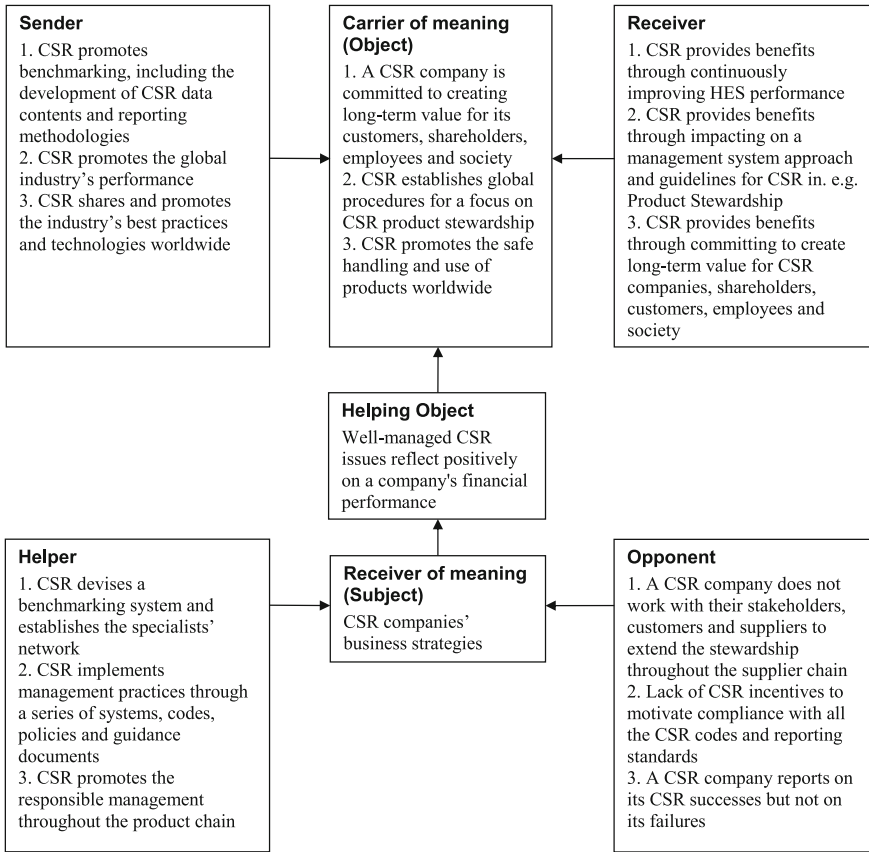


Fig. 3 Actantial model of the CSR application in relation to CSR companies' business strategies

to be audited. For many companies, intangible assets (such as brand, corporate reputation, intellectual capital, etc.) have a greater financial value than fixed assets. Any damage to intangible assets could significantly affect the overall value of the company. The understanding of what these image risks might be and conversely what opportunities could be exploited is a growing area of image risk (and possibility) management.

Hegemony: To be effective, a CSR strategy has to enjoy management commitment to ensure that the strategy is not being implemented in an ad hoc fashion. This can be achieved by establishing management processes so that risks can be identified and managed, the brand is improved and reputation is protected. The creation of a good image in public policies enables a company to translate its corporate values into commitments and responsibilities, and define its objectives and targets. The results of the economic risk assessment in turn could affect the price of financial loans, when these considerations have the so-called price tag.

Recontextualization: When CSR has been correctly implemented by a company, it can expect to receive funding from sources, which support an ethically sustainable and evolving activity, as well as foreseeing and predicting the sustainable future. Financiers will find it easier to grant financial resources, if they do not have any doubts regarding legal action being taken against the company in which they are interested in financing. The financier set-oriented funding objectives are important and the further regular reporting on CSR development is particularly important also in the value of collateral securities. The number of ethical investors continues to grow, so the status of CSR improves. When establishing the CSR image, the annual reports, CSR reports, company websites with CSR results, etc., are important. Furthermore, companies may also receive a wide range of direct queries from the various stakeholders. Another reporting of great importance involves on the social capital, knowledge management and the staff financial statement. A CSR report can be integrated into the annual report and be displayed also on web sites. Most SMEs are not even used to describing their activities in CSR terms, even though their business may involve considerable CSR elements. The major challenge by SMEs is to make visible the existing CSR operations.

Operationalization: When one looks at today's normal stock market, CSR does seem not seen to carry much significance. The only clear benefit of CSR is that the company can concretize a number of the responsibility parameters, and thus establish a wider investor base. Ethical funding will be not directed towards companies which pursue irresponsible policies. Fund managers will actively seek to invest in companies whose products or services are of long-term benefit to the communities in which they operate and contribute to a better environment. Socially responsible investment is growing faster than the general market, and this trend is expected to continue, although perhaps at a slower rate over the medium term. Profit expectations need to be extended longer than the quarterly terms.

Figure 4 presents the semiotic actantial model developed by Greimas (1987, 1990), connecting the theory and the discourse data of CSR in relation to financiers and shareholders.

5.3 Customers and Consumers

Emergence: Corporate values provide an understanding of what the values to which the company adheres, the activities for which it is prepared to be take responsibility and designates its future goals and objectives. They often cover terms such as the vision, the corporate purpose, the mission statement or goals. In the partnership, when one introduces the environmental aspects, the innovative CSR company aims to meet the needs of its customers by providing efficient, high-quality solutions that improve the productivity, end-product quality and eco-efficiency of its customers' industrial processes.

Hegemony: At the same time, innovative environmental solutions as part of the product and services portfolio can represent new business opportunities.

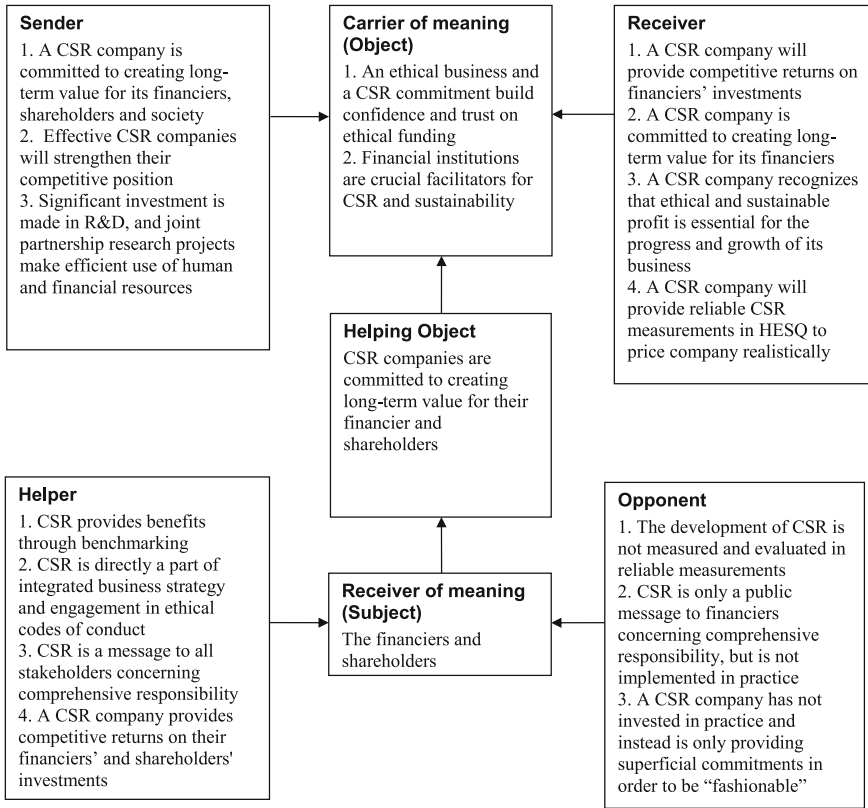


Fig. 4 Actantial model of the CSR application in relation to financiers and shareholders

The solutions may also enhance the competitiveness of the customers. The customers ultimately decide on their own choices, i.e. whether they will reward responsible behaviour or not and whether they are willing to pay a premium for this value. In this regard, there is also a conflict between consumers' values and their concrete purchasing decision.

Recontextualization: Consumers play an important part when it is a question of creating incentives for responsible production and responsible business practice. The requirements for sustainable development data have become progressively more demanding in the extent to which they include transparency, reliability and their ability to be audited. A company's capacity to manage and report on their sustainable development performance plays an integral role in the management of their risk and enhancement of operational performance. Consumers expect that companies need to display their commitment most directly by providing good jobs to people in the community.

Operationalization: A company needs to concretize CSR and report it reliably to its customers and consumers. This succeeds with vast majority of its customers,

when they share the same values and ethical principles. Consumers now expect companies to be more socially responsible. They expect CSR to extend beyond making financial contributions to some charity. Corporations should not expect that consumers will obtain their information from company-generated sources alone. A great number of consumers will check up on any claims. Companies also need to look for new ways to inform consumers about their social responsible actions, which are increasingly perceived as more jobs, environmentally responsible activity and local community interaction. The key elements in good media communication are transparency, comparability and reliable indicators. The Internet is of great importance today, as CSR reports and other information are easily accessible to ordinary consumers and other stakeholders. Consumers, empowered by the Internet, are acquiring new levels of corporate citizenship. Discussions on CSR on the web are used to seek information about whether or not companies are acting in a socially responsible manner. The numbers of consumers using the Internet to research companies through independent CSR sources are growing. Consumers are using the Internet to spread information about CSR. Consumers forward e-mails, and launch CSR campaigns to advocate for some ethical position or cause.

Figure 5 presents the semiotic actantial model developed by Greimas (1987, 1990), connecting the theory and the discourse data of CSR in relation to customers and consumers.

5.4 *Employees of the Companies*

Emergence: The CSR combines the company's own intentions, as expressed in its values and code of conduct in accordance with the expectations of its stakeholders. In the commitment to CSR, the company expresses its commitment to the promotion of sustainable development and its three pillars: economic, environmental and social sustainability. The company's code of conduct sets out common values and ethical principles which are being applied, emphasizing reliability, openness and fairness.

Hegemony: Code of conduct deals with issues such as clear and transparent operational and decision-making structures, fair cooperation with employees, customers, suppliers, colleagues and other stakeholders, and careful handling of confidential information. Paying attention to staff welfare, developing staff competencies and the promoting of the intellectual capital can contribute to a company's ability to attract a skilled labour force.

Recontextualization: A company with good CSR policies will be able to generate commitment among its staff. CSR will become an important factor in competing for the best employees in the future. Including objectives and targets in the performance appraisal system promotes the integration of corporate responsibility issues throughout an organization. Similarly, training and development can help increase the employees' appreciation of the concept of CSR and its significance for the

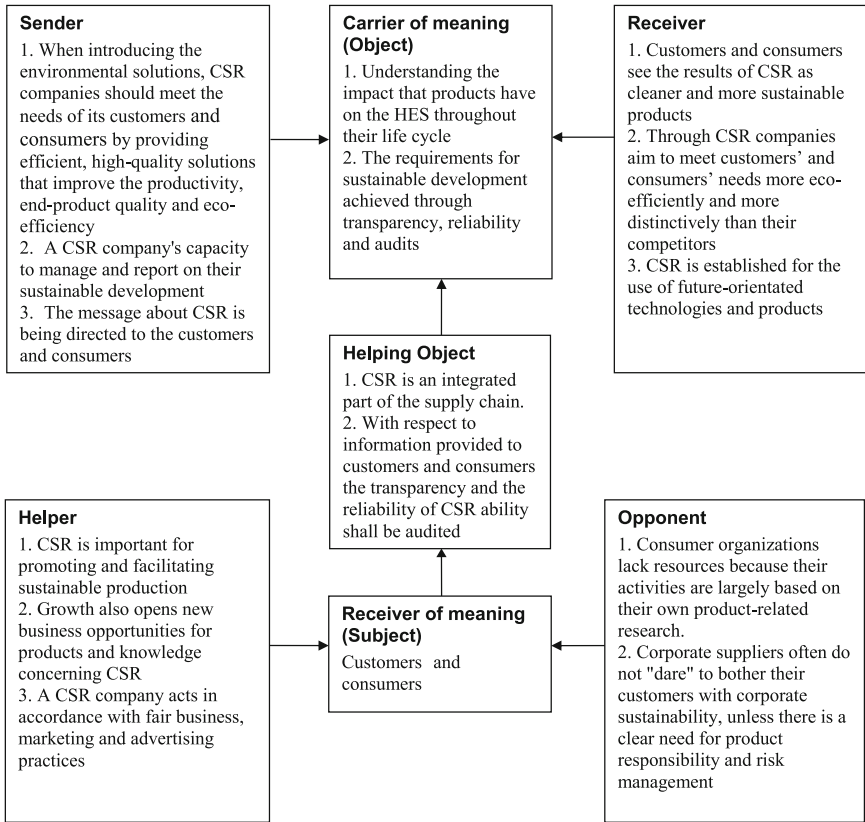


Fig. 5 Actantial model of the CSR application in relation to customers and consumers

company; this in turn should mean that decisions will be made with greater knowledge of the risks and opportunities for the business. The occupational safety and health (OSH) of employees and how this is affected by its operations which are core components of the CSR company. OHS practices can also be based on the CSR company's ethical values, openness, trust and innovativeness and its best practices of social responsibility.

Operationalization: The company complies with international, national and local rules, regulations and agreements. The company's OSH activities are directed by the principles of continuous improvement with an emphasis on quality and know-how about sustainability. The OSH issues impacted by its operations are essential to the CSR company. The company complies with international, national and local rules, regulations and agreements. The company's OSH activities are governed by the principles of continuous improvement with an emphasis quality, innovations, know-how and supporting lifelong learning in the employees.

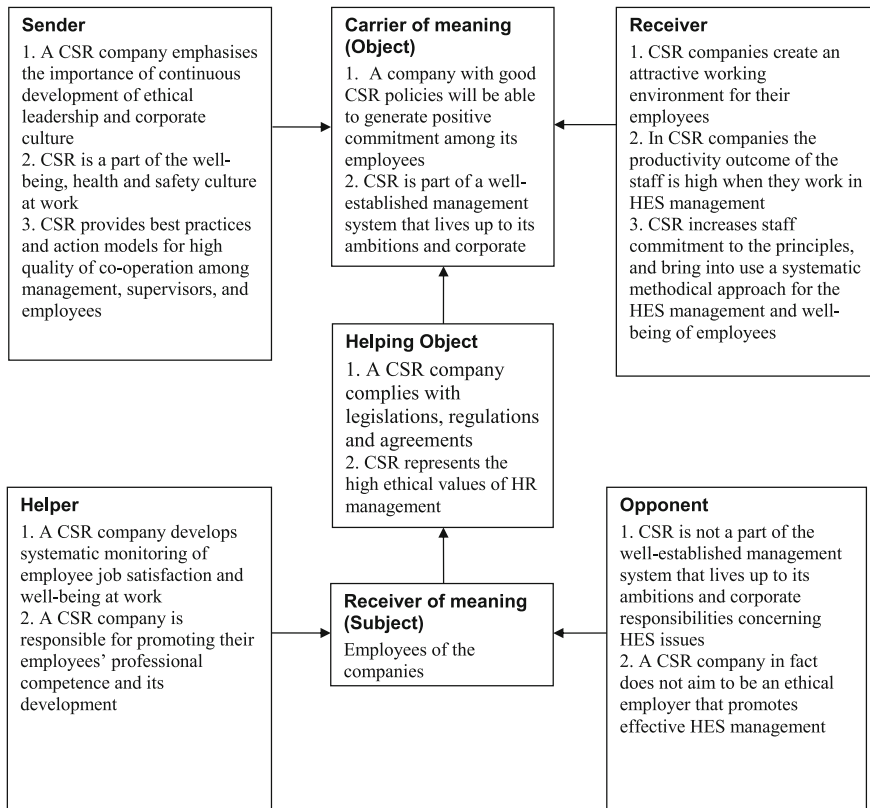


Fig. 6 Actantial model of the CSR application in relation to employees of the companies

Figure 6 presents the semiotic actantial model developed by Greimas (1987, 1990), connecting the theory and the discourse data of CSR in relation to employees of the companies.

5.5 Communities and Authorities

Emergence: In addition to the role of the legislator and the employer, public policy may also take on the responsibility of the client in the case of public procurement. Public procurement is often a highly regulated process with a number of preconditions and some of these are clearly CSR issues, which need to be taken into account. In fact, CSR may also often be defined in the legislation. The problems for international companies may be that there are different types of the legislation in several countries which all need to be included in the company's CSR policy.

The NGO stakeholders can be a gateway to ensure that community and authorities will become involved in promoting better corporate citizenship. One must hope that ethics and social responsibility will have a positive impact on the success of an organization, especially non-governmental stakeholders will make ethical judgments that are likely to influence any purchases. NGOs may also trigger consumer boycotts. There are numerous examples where these have been effective. Nowadays companies are fearful of this kind of negative publicity that they usually correct working practices if it is at all financially feasible.

Hegemony: Community and authorities expect companies not only to obey their legal obligations but also to be socially responsible. They expect CSR to go beyond simply a making financial contribution to some good cause. Community and authorities can encourage enterprises to become better corporate citizens. The governmental and local authorities can also promote the development of a company's CSR policies through initiating a variety of educational projects. Opportunities for partnership in joint projects for example promoting cooperation between companies and the governmental and local authorities may be advantageous.

The NGO stakeholders believe that they must have the opportunity to select or reject certain products or suppliers, even multinational companies depending on whether they are perceived to be acting more or less responsibly in terms of CSR. Some NGO organizations have also been involved in partnership-type joint projects with certain companies. Often a socially aware CSR with good CSR policies dovetail with the sustainable development championed by many NGOs. The task of associations which focuses on environmental protection, as well as consumers' organizations, is often to act as 'neutral' controllers, in relation to the actual CSR achievements.

Recontextualization: The local community has often a particularly important role to play, because many of the company's employees are also members of the local community. A very important issue is to take account of authority stakeholders' expectations and to support interactions, e.g. in situations environment cooperation, it is important to act, in a positive way in order to meet the authority stakeholders' expectations. CSR is 'the extraordinary good', which companies create in addition to fulfilling their statutory and legislation obligations. At present, the development of CSR can be considered to be advancing as a part of best practices partly being driven by market forces.

If CSR is only a platitude, the so-called 'green washing' as footnote in a company's action plan, then it is likely that NGO associations will react against such companies and publicize their hypocrisy. One reason for the many CSR brands is the growing interest of consumers in buying sustainable products and services. Nonetheless, consumers' enthusiasm, awareness and willingness to pay have not yet been converted into a situation where the majority of the consumers are ready to open their wallets to pay for more sustainable choices.

Operationalization: The main focus is on the CSR alliance promotion. In the future, one can anticipate that there will be ever more stringent regulations gradually encompassing all areas, in which a company operates including surveillance, management culture, control, as well as reporting. The ISO Standard 26000:2010

focuses the guidance type of social responsibility on innovation. Innovation is the key to creating win-win situations. There are four broad areas where responsible businesses may encounter a CSR risk: operational risks, regulatory risks, reputation risks and sustainability/strategic risks. Companies need to establish reliable ways to identify important ethical business-based issues, and to incorporate these into their overall risk management systems. Many companies use suites of policies to map the importance of specific governmental regulations, community-impacts, as well as environment, workplace and marketplace issues, and this can help them control risk within those areas. It is clear that these policies must be dynamic and regularly reviewed, so that they reflect the current priorities not only of the business but also of society as a whole.

NGO associations often are the first groups to identify a company's accountability priorities and to trigger changes in the way the companies operate. The NGO associations have different impacts, and the relevance of the publicity generated their activities will vary from company to company.

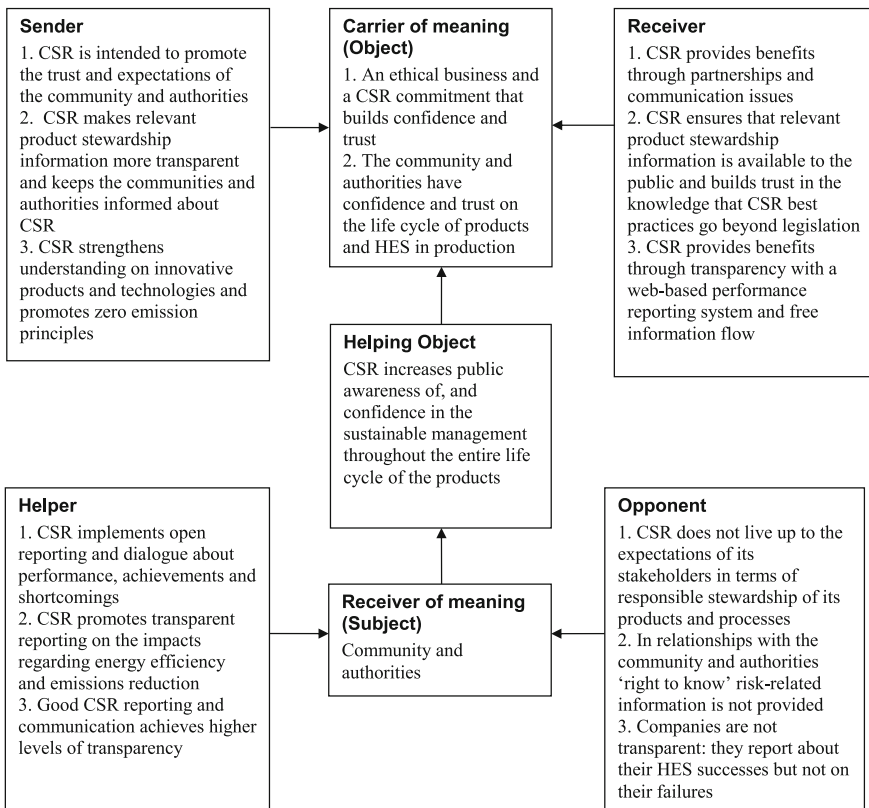


Fig. 7 Actantial model of the RC application in relation to community and authorities

Nonetheless, it is important that all businesses view seriously the specific problems highlighted by NGO associations. It is important that there is a continuous dialogue between the company and these associations. Generally speaking, the NGO associations tend to set very ambitious targets for companies with respect to CSR.

Figure 7 presents the semiotic actantial model developed by Greimas (1987, 1990), connecting the theory and the discourse data of CSR in relation to community and authorities.

6 Discussion

6.1 Comparing the Results with Other Studies

The results of this study are similar with the findings of Windell (2006, p. 17) that the ideas and arguments of CSR are constructed in a translation processes involving a diverse groups of actor and, in particular, that the social partners are not passive adopters of ideas; instead they play an important role in translation processes (Windell 2006, p. 17).

The results of this study support the findings of Windell (2006, p. 41), i.e. if one wishes to understand how and why ideas about CSR are formed, created and recreated one needs to address how social partners circulate ideas. The concept of translation conceptualizes the circulation and construction of ideas in CSR as processes in which concepts are materialized and endowed with meaning. In addition, the results support the conclusions of Salzman et al. (2006, p. 3), i.e. the interactions between stakeholders and companies in CSR-related issues are characterized by the fact that stakeholders contribute something to the company and in exchange expect that their interests will be satisfied by some kind of return.

The results of this study are similar to the findings of other investigators (e.g. Salzman et al. 2006, pp. 3–4) that the fundamental organizing principles of CSR are as follows: (1) the companies' economic responsibility to generate profits; (2) the legal responsibility of a business to be in compliance with existing regulation; (3) the ethical responsibility refers to the fulfilment of society's expectations; and (4) philanthropic actions result in social capital benefit of human resources. The results support the findings of Ramus and Oppegaard (2007, p. 5) that the integration of value-driven activities with implementation-focused processes will be achieved differentially in each case, depending on a series of characteristics unique to each organization. However, Ramus and Montiel (2005, p. 378) stated that similar policies seem to underlie different kinds of sustainability management systems in different companies.

The results are similar to the works of Ramus and Oppegaard (2006, p. 12) who claimed the top management has to make an appropriate strategic response to actual real-life situations. The results support the results of others that the financial markets now demand that companies exercise transparency in their operations (e.g. Dobers and Wolff 2000) and today the large financial institutions can exert a major

influence on how a company must operate within society (Steger 2006, p. 4). Furthermore, today, one does see the appearance of socially responsible investing ratings although these are still not very insignificant (Steger 2006, p. 4). The result support the findings of others (e.g. Dobers and Wolff 2000) that the consumers seem to express positive environmental attitudes, but this only is reflected seldom in their behaviour (Dobers and Wolff 2000).

6.2 Discussion on the Generalizability of the CSR Discourse Analysis

The standardized open-ended online questionnaire consisted of a set of CSR questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking the respondents through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions phrased with essentially the same words. The questions were formulated in advance and provided in the sequence in which they were to be answered. The basic strength of the standardized open-ended interview is that the respondents answer the same questions, thus increasing comparability of responses. The advantage of this questionnaire is that it makes the answers provided by a number of different individuals in a more systematic and comprehensive manner limiting the issues to be handled in the interview. The weakness of this approach is that it does not permit the interviewer to pursue topics or issues that were not anticipated when the questionnaire instrument was elaborated. In addition, a number of questions were included in the framework allowed which the respondent the possibility to respond in greater depth. Thus, the strength of this latter approach is that this part of the questionnaire is flexible and highly responsive to individual differences, situational changes and emerging new information.

In the CSR process, concepts are also described meaningfully since they can be presented in accordance with the existing institutional context. Hence, by evaluating a broad range of actor groups, one can potentially clarify how translation processes proceed as a part of an interaction between actors that intuitively seek to translate their ideas in accordance with their own interests and working practices (Windell 2006, p. 41).

Other research methods could be applied to accompany with DA, e.g. the methods developed by other groups (e.g. Leca and Naccache 2006; Vincent 2008). Leca and Naccache (2006) developed a model with which to analyse institutional pressures in an attempt explain actors' actions and behaviours and to consider simultaneously the influence of both actors' actions and the structures in which they are embedded. Vincent (2008) created a critical realistic model to wish which to investigate interorganizational relationships and networks and which can identify the impact of social processes and how these are shaped by the behavioural orientations of the actors. This realistic but critical approach provides a perspective on agency and social processes that facilitate analyses of the behavioural orientations of actors and how these combine in order influence on processes and outcomes.

Qualitative discourse research (Fairclough 2003; 2005) represents a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand RC phenomena in context-specific settings. This is related to the concept of good quality research when reliability has the purpose of ‘generating understanding’ (Stenbacka 2001; Lincoln and Guba 1985, p. 317; Healy and Perry 2000; Hoepfl 1997; Patton 2002; Potter 1996). If the validity or trustworthiness of discourse research into CSR can be maximized, then one can obtain more ‘defensible results’ (see Johnson 1997) and this may lead to better generalizability which is one of the concepts proposed by Stenbacka (2001) as the structure for documenting high-quality qualitative research. The concept of validity is described by a wide range of terms in qualitative studies. Creswell and Miller (2000) suggested that the validity is affected by the investigator’s perception of validity in the study and his/her choice of paradigm assumptions. In qualitative research, the principle of discovering truth through measures of reliability and validity is replaced by the concept of trustworthiness, which is ‘defensible’ (Johnson 1997) and establishing confidence also in the findings of the discourses in this case about CSR (see Lincoln and Guba 1985). Therefore, the results of this discourse research on CSR have adequate generalizability and trustworthiness.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

In a world of complexity and change, the commercial enterprises are expected to be able to cope with much greater diversity of CSR problems. They have to continue to ensure that their organizational CSR processes are efficient and that they are served by the latest developments in technology. Within CSR, the top management has to make an appropriate strategic response to actual real-life situations. A central consideration for business organizations must be how well private CSR initiatives reflect and reinforce government agreements on labour, social and environmental standards. The financial markets now demand that companies ensure transparency in their operations and today the large financial institutions can exert a major influence on how a company must operate within society. The consumers seem to express positive environmental attitudes relating to CSR, but this is seldom reflected in their behaviour. Business and society represent twin entities, i.e. (1) business firms are social institutions and hence (2) these institutions must earn their legitimacy from multiple sectors of society.

The CSR is seen as that part of the overall strategic management of the organization that focuses specifically on the social and ethical issues embedded into the functioning and decision processes of the firm. The CSR processes occur in the context of both organizational (internal) and environmental (external) forces. In the light of these challenges, a conceptual framework of CSR can be devised and its different aspects can be analysed from perspective of stakeholder-specific factors that influence the effectiveness of CSR. By engaging in CSR activities, companies not only can generate favourable stakeholder attitudes and better support behaviours but also, in the long run, build a good corporate image, strengthen stakeholder–company

relationships, and enhance stakeholders' advocacy behaviours. However, stakeholders' low awareness of companies' CSR activities remain as a critical impediment in companies' attempts to maximize business benefits from their CSR activities.

Acknowledgments The author are deeply grateful to the following people who gave generously of their time and produced their discussion data of this study: Hans Grahn (Senior CSR Specialist) in the Confederation of Finnish Industries EK, Jyrki Helin (Responsible Research Specialist) in the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions SAK and Juha Beurling (Project Manager of Ethical Consumers) in the Finnish Consumers' Association.

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