Chapter 13
Corporate Social Responsibility in Business Education: A Review of Current Status of American Business Schools Curriculum

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Abstract This paper investigated the extent to which CSR was incorporated into MBA courses in business schools in the United States. MBA students are the managers and leaders of the future and their knowledge and skills will influence the extent to which business CSR and sustainability will be achieved. This paper makes an exploratory analysis of MBA curriculum at the top 50 business schools in the United States. Our findings show that a high percentage of business schools in the US includes CSR-related subjects on their curriculum. CSR content is taught as either specific CSR subjects (stand-alone CSR subjects) or as part of various subjects on the academic curriculum (embedded CSR subjects). While at first sight our findings may seem promising, a more detailed analysis shows that few MBA curricula include stand-alone CSR subjects and that although many MBA programs have embedded CSR subjects, the content of CSR at most MBA schools is by no means fully developed.

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13.1 Introduction

Studies on corporate social responsibility (CSR) have concluded that businesses should become more sustainable (Aras & Crowther, 2009; Dunphy, Griffiths, & Benn, 2007; Shrivastava, 2008; Stead & Stead, 2004; Stubbs & Cocklin, 2007). In addition, international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) have called upon corporations to become more socially responsible. For example, in 2001, Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary General, argued that the biggest challenge of the new century was to make everyone on the planet aware that sustainable development was a reality, and not an abstract concept (United Nations, 2001). By this he meant that the quality of life of present and future generations needed to be improved by reconciling economic growth, social development and environmental protection. Following this pronouncement, in December 2002, the United Nations General Assembly declared a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, the aim of which was to promote education as a basis for a more sustainable human society and to integrate sustainable development into educational systems at all levels. It designated the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as the lead agency to promote the Decade.

Education is the key to sustainable development, so it should be reviewed at all levels and there should be a clear focus on the development of sustainability-related knowledge, skills, perspectives and values for the benefit of current and future societies (UNESCO, 2005). In management education, universities have a vital role: to equip the next generation of business leaders with the skills they need to cope with an era of globalization, and create economic growth and a sustainable future for people and the planet (Ethical Corporation, 2006). Business educators are responsible not only for providing students with opportunities to build business skills, but also to help them to understand the powerful effects that business decisions and actions can have on society and the potential collateral damage they can cause. In this regard, teaching ethics and social responsibility is a critical step towards helping business students understand this balance (Kolodinsky, Madden, Zisk, & Henkel, 2009).

Furthermore, graduates need to be made aware of the importance of honesty and integrity. Business schools need to ensure that students are equipped with the ethical integrity to meet challenges of the real world of business. Incorporation of course units that address business ethics and corporate social responsibility are obvious attempts to counteract any negative influences on graduate skills (Jackson, 2009). Business schools at all levels must encourage students to develop skills in business ethics and CSR.

This paper takes as its starting point the view that CSR and sustainability encompass economic, social and environmental dimensions, and is one of the most important and urgent issues facing businesses and society today (Dunphy et al., 2007). Building upon previous research we argue that there is a need for managers to increase their understanding of CSR sustainability and the strategies that can be developed to make their organizations more sustainable. In this study we

examined the extent to which MBA courses offered by American business schools explicitly stated that CSR and sustainability was addressed in their MBA curricula. This paper reports the results of our investigation and aims to stimulate discussion about how business CSR and sustainability are being addressed within business education and whether it is currently meeting internationally identified standards.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the extent to which CSR is taught in the business schools of American universities. More specifically, it provides an overview of teaching in of CSR in business administration and management courses in American universities. It analyzes not only information from the curricula of American university business schools but also the content of individual subjects. Similar to Matten and Moon (2004), we assumed that CSR would mostly be understood as an umbrella term for a broad set of synonyms and overlapping concepts reflecting both business and society relations and "business ethics." In this regard, De Bakker, Groenewegen and Hond (2005) suggest that progress in the literature on the social responsibilities of business is obscured or even hampered by the continuing introduction of new constructs. Over time, a number of concepts have been added to a continuing debate that builds on notions of the social responsibilities of business, firms, and their managers. Mohan (2003) views CSR as an empirical concept that refers to one or a few of the many incarnations of the business–society relationship. The meaning of the concept varies in time and place. Furthermore, it is a concept that relates to, but sometimes also competes with, other concepts such as business ethics, sustainable development, corporate philanthropy or corporate citizenship (De Bakker et al., 2005).

The paper is structured as follows. In the first section, we review previous studies in the area of CSR in Management Education. We then describe the methodology used in our study of the courses offered by American business schools, and go on to analyze and discuss the results. Finally, we present our conclusions and their implications for universities, the limitations of the study and future lines of research.

13.2 Review of Previous Studies

CSR has been a topic of debate in both business and education for the past four and half decades. The debate on the role of business ethics and business education is by no means new. It started in the 1970s in the United States, but has recently acquired renewed strength (Melé, 2008). Over the years, ethics education in business schools has evolved and has gradually incorporated new topics and domains such as CSR and sustainability (Christensen, Peirce, Hartman, Hoffman, & Carrier, 2007). Our review of existing studies has enabled us to better understand the various terms used to refer to CSR issues. Ethical and social responsibility are terms that have been in common use for some time now, while, according to Rands and Starik (2009), sustainability is a fairly recent phenomenon in management education.

The teaching of ethics/CSR has been examined from different perspectives. Some papers have provided a descriptive review of CSR courses, their historical development and format. Others have provided a prescriptive account of the pedagogical issues of teaching ethics and made recommendations for teachers. And yet others have made analytical judgments about whether courses in ethics are, in fact, effective at modifying values and attitudes in students (McDonald, 2004). The present paper focuses on the review of the descriptive literature. Particular attention has been paid to the overall status of CSR in business schools. The most comprehensive description of the situation in Europe was made by Mahoney (1990) in a comparative study on the teaching of business ethics in the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe. More recently, Matten and Moon (2004) focused on CSR and provided a description of CSR teaching in Europe by surveying a wide range of business education institutions in different countries. They analyzed the extent of CSR education, the different ways in which it is defined and the levels at which it is taught. Their research provides an account of the efforts that are being made to "mainstream" CSR teaching and of the teaching methods deployed.

Other studies have also examined the topic of ethics and CSR education in MBA programs (Benn & Dunphy, 2009; Christensen et al., 2007; Cornelius, Wallace, & Tassabehji, 2007; Navarro, 2008). Similarly, Benn and Bubna-Litic (2004) and Tilbury, Crawley, and Berry (2005) examined the extent to which Australian MBA programs dealt with sustainability issues. They concluded that Australian MBA programs offered graduates little preparation for dealing with the multidisciplinary challenges of introducing sustainability or corporate sustainability issues in their workplace. Building on these previous studies, Benn and Dunphy (2009) reported on an exploratory project using an action research approach to integrate sustainability into core subjects in the MBA curriculum at a university in Australia. They also identified some key facilitators and impediments to successful integration of sustainability in the MBA core. Christensen et al. (2007) analyzed how the top 50 business schools (as rated by the Financial Times in its 2006 global MBA rankings) addressed ethics, corporate social responsibility and sustainability as separate and distinct topics in their MBA curricula. Their findings revealed that a majority of schools (84.1 %) required one or more of these topics to be covered in their MBA curriculum and that one-third of schools required all three topics to be covered. They also identified a trend toward the inclusion of sustainability-related courses. Subsequently, Navarro (2008) analyzed the top 50 US business schools and how many of them exhibited the major features of the ideal MBA curriculum: multidisciplinary integration, experiential learning, soft-skill development, information technology and global perspective, ethics and corporate responsibility. The results of his research suggested that three of the six major features of the ideal MBA curriculum—soft-skill, corporate social responsibility and a global perspective—continued to get less emphasis than traditional functional silo courses such as accounting, finance and marketing. Concretely, his research showed that less than half of the top schools required a stand-alone course on corporate ethics and CSR.

The articles in the special issues mentioned above provide a wide range of approaches to CSR and sustainability education in management (classroom experiences, theoretical, pedagogical perspectives, etc.), which will help advance the design, adoption and success of CSR and sustainability in management education. The study by Wu, Huang, Kuo, and Wu (2010) provides a rounded picture of the present state of management education for sustainability, by making an exploratory empirical content analysis of the world's major business schools. Their findings revealed that European schools favored an elective-oriented approach and placed more emphasis on the graduate level, whereas American schools favored a more compulsory-oriented approach at the undergraduate level. They also found differences in the overall level of sustainability-related curriculum, the specific content, and the teaching methods between global regions, national development stages and university rankings.

13.3 Research Questions

Research question 1: How is the CSR course integrated into an MBA program?
Research question 2: What is the level of development of CSR content?
Research question 3: What are the key success factors (KSFs) behind the integration of CSR courses in MBA programs?
Research question 4: What are the key barriers to integrating CSR courses in MBA programs?

13.3.1 Research Method

Our research is focused on top-rated MBA programs in in the United States. In order to place boundaries on the potential research population, we considered the list from the US News & World Report ratings of business schools published annually and are publicly available on the website of US News & World Report. Our sample was composed of the top 50 business schools listed there, and our data were collected through the websites of the schools selected.

We considered that an exploratory and descriptive web-content analysis would be an appropriate strategy for this study because it has been used by other researchers, such as Seto-Pamies, Domingo-Vernis, and Rabassa-Figueras (2011). Although surveys have played a significant role in the overall methodology of previous studies (the majority being distributed to the deans of business schools), we decided that a web-based content analysis would be the most appropriate method for our study. Wu et al. (2010) suggest that web-based content analyses may be indispensable to mitigate the weakness of survey research on the one hand, and the resource constraints of interviews on the other, since the selection process is nondiscriminatory, and the information is publicly available. This methodology has

also been applied in recent studies (Cornelius et al., 2007; Navarro, 2008; Seto-Pamies et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2010).

The information disclosed on websites is open to the public and also updated on a regular basis. As a formal source of information, school websites have become a commonly used tool for interaction and communication between business schools and their relative stakeholders. However, it must first be acknowledged that the statistical results of all web-based studies are influenced by data availability, update frequency, and language of use (Wu, 2007). However, we have made a significant attempt to minimize these inherent limitations by performing our analysis on the basis of the whole population.

To achieve our purpose, we analyzed the curricula of the MBA courses at the top 50 business school in America as well as the different teaching programs of the individual subjects offered. The universities were identified using the US News & World Report 2012 website and the data was collected in January and February of 2013. In order to assess the degree of CSR content exhibited by each business school, we made a content analysis of the official websites and linked internal documents. We accessed each business school's website to determine the list of required and optional courses as well as other aspects of the curriculum pertinent to the analysis. The analysis included a comprehensive review of the subject titles and their course outline.

13.4   Analysis and Results

After analyzing the 50 universities that offer CSR courses, we found 33 universities, 66 %, which include the term "social responsibility" or "business ethics" in their MBA subject titles. Furthermore, of the 50 responding schools, only 18 universities, 36 %, require MBA students to take CSR courses as stand-alone courses; 35 % of the universities' CRS courses are embedded throughout their curriculum. As can be seen in Table 13.1, we found that 18 or 36 % of business schools have CSR as either core or compulsory course requirement for their MBA program. We found that 32 or 64 % of the institutions offer CSR courses as optional or free elective. We found that stand-alone CSR subjects are typically offered in the students' final academic years regardless of whether they are core/compulsory or optional. Figure 13.1 shows a breakdown of the extent to which CSR courses are integrated into the MBA program. A detailed analysis of our findings is presented in Table 13.1 and Fig. 13.1 below.

13.4.1   Required CSR Courses

Our findings suggest that, when it comes to making CSR mandatory, 36 % of the schools require students to take CSR as part of their program. This finding is

Table 13.1 A breakdown of how CSR courses are taught in MBA programs

Extent of curriculum	Number	Percent (%)
Stand-alone CSR course	15	30
Embedded CSR course	35	70
Required CSR as a core course	18	36
Elective/optional CSR course	32	64

Fig. 13.1 A breakdown of how CSR courses are taught in MBA programs
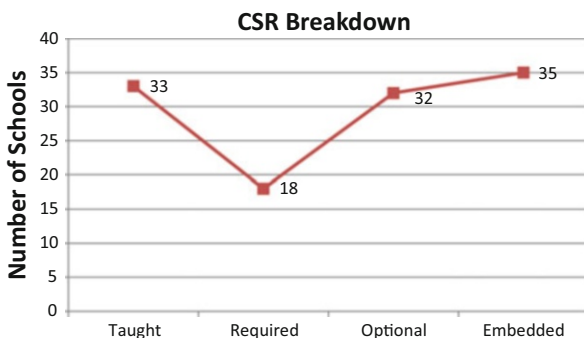
interesting in that it indicates that very few top schools do not offer CSR as a required course in their curriculum. Figure 13.2 shows a breakdown of the responses. Of the 50 responding schools, only 18 reported that their institutions require MBA students to study CSR as a required course, representing 36 % of the respondents.

13.4.2 Embedded CSR Courses

Our results show that of the 50 business schools surveyed, a total of 35 or 70 % offered embedded CSR courses (see Fig. 13.3) indicating that CSR is included with other topics. The most frequently cited combinations were CSR and ethics taught together in a required course (55 %); sustainability and CSR taught together in a required course (63 %); and CSR and leadership (42 %) taught together in a required course.

13.4.3 Stand-Alone CSR Courses

Stand-alone CSR courses were typically found to be offered during the students' final academic years. Forty-eight percent of the respondents indicated that CSR courses are taught as stand-alone courses. We found that that 52 % of stand-alone CSR courses were taught in the first year of their MBA programs. Therefore, students start to receive training in this area from the beginning of their degrees.
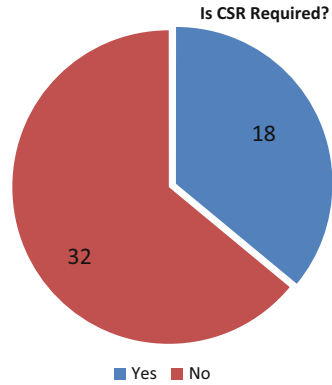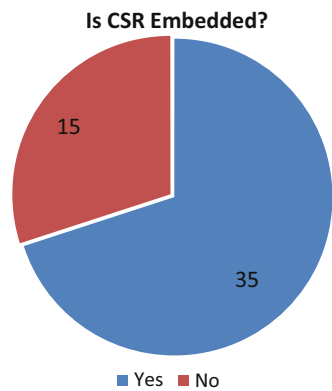
Fig. 13.2 CSR offered as
required courses

Is CSR Required?

18

32

■ Yes ■ No

Fig. 13.3 CSR offered as
embedded courses

**Is CSR Embedded?**

15

35

■ Yes ■ No

Stand-alone CSR courses are also reported to be embedded throughout the program
and are mainly taught under ethics and sustainability. In addition, CSR is covered in
other MBA core course contents such as strategic management, entrepreneurship,
leadership, marketing, supply chain, and international business. This suggests that
the MBA curriculum plays the biggest role in teaching CSR. Stand-alone courses
tend to cover areas of CSR more thoroughly than courses taught using the embed-
ded method.

13.4.4   Option/Elective Courses

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which CSR courses are offered as
an option or elective. The majority of schools, 32, or 64 %, indicated that their
institution offers CSR courses as an option or an elective. An item analysis of a
question was asked to determine the extent to which students' select CSR courses as
an option given other elective courses in their program. The results of that analysis

Fig. 13.4 CSR offered as an option or elective

Is CSR offered as an Option?

18

32

■ Yes ■ No
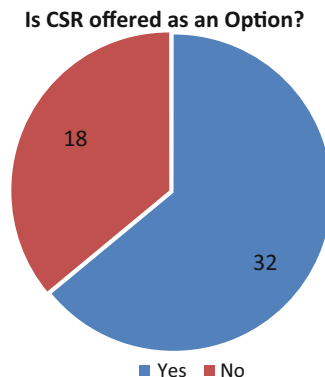
showed that an overwhelming majority of the respondents, 89 %, stated that the majority of the students in their program elected to take CSR courses as an elective or an optional course. This suggests that MBA students are interested in knowing more about CSR. When CSR is embedded in an MBA program, it is often taught as one section or sections in the course. Based on this finding, one may say that CSR is still relatively underdeveloped, as mandatory courses in the MBA degree curriculum go (Fig. 13.4).

13.4.5 Development of CSR Content

We found that the content of stand-alone CSR deals with CSR, but in embedded CSR, CSR can appear in the course outline in different ways: as a section of a topic, as different sections of different topics or as a specific topic. We analyze the extent to which CSR content is developed in embedded CSR courses. We use two perspectives: the first considers how CSR content appears in the outline of the course, whereas the second considers the relative weight of this content in terms of academic credits. In both approaches, we consider the distinction between core/compulsory subjects and optional subjects. The first approach reveals that 90 % of the total core/compulsory CSR devotes an entire semester to teach CSR topics (see Table 13.2). In addition, a total of 80 % of optional CSR dedicate an entire topic to CSR. CSR content in embedded CSR courses is less developed in the optional subjects than in the core/compulsory programs (see Table 13.3). In our second approach, we estimated the credits assigned to subjects containing CSR content in order to analyze the depth in which these subjects cover CSR. This estimation will give us a more detailed idea of the relative importance of the CSR content because it not only shows the extent to which CSR is covered by a subject, it also shows the relative weight of CSR within the entire subject program (given that not all subjects contain the same number of topics). To make this estimation, we assumed that all subject topics have the same weight in the subject and calculated the percentage of

Table 13.2 Level of development of CSR content in core/compulsory

N = 50		
Topic	Number	Percent
Part of a topic	4	8
One topic	5	10
More than one topic	10	20
All CSR topics	31	62

Table 13.3 Level of development of CSR content in optional/elective

N = 50		
Topic	Number	Percent
Part of a topic	5	10
One topic	8	16
More than one topic	15	30
All CSR topics	22	44

credits that correspond to CSR content. Again, we consider the distinction between core/compulsory subjects and optional subjects. Our analysis revealed that CSR courses are assigned equal credits whether offered as stand-alone or embedded courses in the program.

13.4.6 Success Factors in Developing CSR Courses

Table 13.4 shows the key success factors (KSFs) in the integration of CSR content into MBA programs.

Table 13.4 suggests that CSR education is mainly driven by student demand, faculty interest, stakeholders demand, research funding, AACSB accreditation, collaboration with companies, and new research inputs. Our respondents ranked stakeholder input, corporate recruitment, collaboration with other schools, individual/company sponsorship, and government education policy as least important.

13.4.7 Barriers Behind Integrating CSR Courses into MBA Curricula

Table 13.5 shows that faculty interest and student demand not only drive the mainstreaming of CSR education, but the lack thereof may also inhibit it. While Table 13.5 suggests that, in general, lack of student demand seems to be a far more important barrier, respondents believed that the lack of national education policies may present a barrier to the mainstreaming of CSR education.

Table 13.4 Key success factors behind integrating CSR content into MBA programs

Items	Mean	SD	Range
Student demand	4.58	0.70	4–5
Faculty interest	4.56	0.75	4–5
Stakeholders demand	4.55	0.77	4–5
Research funding	4.54	0.78	3–4
Accreditation (AACSB)	4.53	0.80	3–4
Collaboration with companies	4.24	0.84	4–5
New research outputs	4.10	0.87	4–5
Stakeholder input	3.77	0.85	3–4
Corporate recruitment	3.78	0.82	3–4
Collaboration with other schools	3.70	0.77	3–4
Individual/company sponsorship	3.62	0.79	3–4
Government education policy	3.44	0.81	3–4

Table 13.5 Key barriers to integrating CSR content into MBA curricula

Items	Mean	SD	Range
Lack of faculty interest	3.66	0.82	3–4.0
Lack of research funding	3.63	0.84	3–4.0
Lack of collaboration with companies	3.42	0.86	3–4.0
Lack of individual/company sponsorship	3.39	0.88	3–3.5
Lack of student demand	3.30	0.99	3–3.5
Lack of corporate recruitment	3.28	0.97	3–3.5
Lack of collaboration with stakeholders	3.22	0.95	3–3.5
Lack of dedicated teaching and research	3.21	0.93	3–3.5
Lack of teaching materials	3.19	0.91	2–3.5
Lack of new research outputs	3.16	0.90	2–3.5
Lack of national education policy	3.10	1.10	2–3.2
Lack of collaboration with other schools	3.08	1.08	2.3.2
Lack of stakeholder input	3.05	1.11	2–3.2
Accreditation	2.70	1.13	2–3.0

13.5   Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this paper is to provide an initial description of the educational status of CSR in the context of the United States, analyze whether students receive CSR training in their MBA programs, and, if so, determine how CSR courses are integrated into the MBA programs. To achieve our aim, we analyzed the curricula and MBA programs of the top 50 business schools in America that offer a master's degree in business administration. One of the main findings of the research is that the majority of the top business school in the United States (more than half) include CSR issues in their curriculum, either as specific CSR courses (stand-alone CSR courses) or as part of other subjects (embedded CSR courses).

While at first sight these findings may seem promising, they do not mean that the CSR education offered by universities is sufficient to meet the present demands of society. A more detailed analysis of the data shows us that only 20 % of universities

include stand-alone CSR subjects in their curriculum. This suggests that CSR is still not considered a basic skill for MBA degrees in universities in the United States. Our findings show that in most top business school MBA programs, CSR content is taught embedded in other courses. We did notice that a good percentage of CSR topics are compulsory, to ensure that all students have at least some elementary knowledge of CSR information. However, an additional analysis of the embedded courses, which takes into account how CSR content is portrayed in the course outline and its relative weight in terms of academic credits suggests that the level of development of CSR is relatively low. In more specific terms, CSR content has a relative weight of less than 5 % when taught as an embedded subject within courses containing other material. Our findings show that CSR education in the MBA courses offered by the top business schools in America is still relatively underdeveloped. Overall, findings of our research are comparable to those of previous studies (Seto-Pamies et al., 2011; Barkhuysen & Rossouw, 2000; Cowton & Cummins, 2003; Macfralane & Ottewill, 2004; McKenna, 1995) conducted in other countries on the extent to which CSR is taught in business schools.

Although there are encouraging signs that CSR is being included in business education, there is still a long way to go before all management students can be said to have received a thorough education on CSR issues. Our research also provides some insights into how CSR issues are covered in MBA programs. According to Audebrand (2010), CSR has become a key issue for organizations and has therefore evolved from being a marginal concern in management theory, research, and education to occupying a central position, and students need to be presented these topics from a strategic perspective. With regard to embedded CSR courses, these seem to contain CSR content that is distributed among a wider range of business fields such as marketing, human resources, strategic management, international management, and international business, whereas stand-alone courses in CSR seem to be more discipline-specific. However, as Audebrand (2010) indicates, the ultimate goal is to comprehensively ground CSR in strategic management education. Determining how CSR issues and values can be made an integral part of strategic decision-making is one of the most important challenges in business education (Seto-Pamies et al., 2011; Stead & Stead, 2004).

Because business schools and universities interface with a large number of future leaders and occupy a strategic position which they can use to contribute to the development of skills and values related to sustainability and social progress (Seto-Pamies et al., 2011), they must accept their responsibility and make attempts to increase the weight of ethics and CSR information in their curricula (Sims & Sims, 1991). As Melé (2008) suggested, the crisis in business ethics not only signifies a change for companies, but also an opportunity to improve education in the field of management. In order to adapt university education to a more sustainable human society, the curriculum will have to be rethought so that it equips professionals with the appropriate CSR skills (Melé, 2008).

Our research is a starting point for further discussion on how CSR issues should be integrated into MBA curricula. Presently, there is an ongoing debate over

whether CSR should be incorporated as specific subjects (stand-alone CSR courses), or integrated into a variety of subjects as cross-sectional topics (embedded CSR courses), or whether both strategies should be adopted simultaneously (Christensen et al., 2007). As Hartman and Werhane (2009) point out, there is no universal agreement on how best to prepare our students. On the one hand, the stand-alone CSR course option would allow more time and opportunity to develop the relationships between CSR and other MBA subjects. The benefit of this approach is that CSR would have its own, clearly defined identity within the discipline of management. The major drawback, however, is that it requires time, resources, and cooperation by faculty and administrators throughout the discipline, the school, and the university (Rusinko, 2010). In addition, CSR would run the risk of being seen as a separate issue, disconnected from larger business concerns.

On the other hand, with the embedded CSR course option, management educators would have to challenge students' worldviews and encourage them to explicitly analyze their assumptions about business, the environment, and society (Audebrand, 2010; Ghoshal, 2005; Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008). The advantage of this option is that CSR is integrated across numerous disciplines within business, or across the entire business curriculum, and impacts on a larger number of students. Nevertheless, its major disadvantage is that it requires a school-wide commitment with respect to time, resources, and support (Rusinko, 2010). Even so, embedded

CSR courses need to take into account the level of development of CSR content (for example, through its relative weight in terms of academic credits). Overall, it appears that many universities are seeking new ways of integrating CSR and new methodologies into business schools (stand-alone/embedded subjects, concentrations, majors, specializations, co-curricular options, etc.), but this is a relatively new multifaceted and ongoing process (Seto-Pamies et al., 2011).

Our research should prompt further discussion on how and why American top business schools have developed current CSR content and the conditions that are suitable for the successful implementation of CSR content in higher education. Our research offers a starting point for further discussion and debate about incorporating CSR material into business education. There are, however, challenges that need to be resolved when doing so. It is important to provide an exciting influence for curriculum review and renewal, as well as a fertile area for both empirical and conceptual research. Our hope is that this study will encourage other American universities to take more initiative in increasing CSR in their curricula and will lead to an opportunity to improve education in the field of management. Our study provided a useful reference for faculty and university administrators in other countries with circumstances similar to those in the United States and further studies may include samples from different countries, faculty, students, deans, provosts, boards of trustees, and other stakeholders in order to increase the generalizability of this research.

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