Individual Competencies for Corporate Social Responsibility: A Literature and Practice Perspective

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Abstract Because corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be beneficial to both companies and its stakeholders, interest in factors that support CSR performance has grown in recent years. A thorough integration of CSR in core business processes is particularly important for achieving effective long-term CSR practices. Here, we explored the individual CSR-related competencies that support CSR implementation in a corporate context. First, a systematic literature review was performed in which relevant scientific articles were identified and analyzed. Next, 28 CSR directors and managers were interviewed. The literature review complemented with interview data resulted in the following eight distinct CSR-related competencies: *(1) Anticipating CSR challenges; (2) Understanding CSR-relevant systems and subsystems; (3) Understanding CSR-relevant standards; (4) CSR management competencies, including (4a) Leading CSR programs, (4b) Managing CSR programs, and (4c) Identifying and realizing CSR-related business opportunities; (5) Realizing CSR-supportive interpersonal processes; (6) Employing CSR-supportive personal characteristics and attitudes; (7) Personal value-driven competencies, including (7a) Ethical normative competencies, (7b) Balancing personal ethical values and business objectives, and (7c) Realizing self-regulated CSR-related behaviors and active involvement; and (8) Reflecting on personal CSR views and experiences.* Based on these results, implications for further research on this topic, as well as implications for practitioners, are discussed.

Abbreviations

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	A business approach to sustainable development in which an organization voluntarily decides to achieve business success in a way that reflects the interest of all stakeholders (e.g., the investors, employees, environment, and community)
Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)	A process of learning how to make decisions regarding the long-term future of the economy, ecology, and equity of all communities

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Sustainable Development (SD)	Sustainability is often defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Nowadays, this concept is characterized by three concepts that emphasize the need for striking a balance between social, natural, and financial resources (also represented as the "3Ps" components" People, Planet, and Profit/Prosperity). Sustainability can be perceived as a dynamic goal that must be continuously reassessed. The road or process toward sustainability is called "sustainable development"

Introduction

Companies increasingly recognize the importance of their role in sustainable development (SD), and by engaging in corporate social responsibility (CSR) companies aim to obtain a satisfying balance in the environmental, social, and economic aspects of their business practices. CSR can be viewed as a business approach to SD in which companies voluntarily integrate environmental, social, and economic challenges in their business strategies and in their interactions with stakeholders (Dahlsrud 2008).

Interest in how the CSR performance can be enhanced is growing in both the scientific world and in practice. According to Accenture (2010) 93 % of CEO's of leading firms in the world perceive CSR as essential for their company's success. Besides its potential beneficial effects for employees and external stakeholders, CSR is also regarded as an important source for new ventures and competitive advantages (Dentoni et al. 2012).

In order to benefit from sustainable business practices, it is not enough to develop CSR policies (Harris and Crane 2002), create specific CSR departments (Holton et al. 2010), implement a code of conduct (Mamic 2005) or sustainability management system (Holton et al. 2010), or having the senior manager's buy-in and commitment (Thomas and Simerly 1994). Dealing with complex and ever-changing problems and challenges, such as sustainability, requires specific competencies and higher order thinking skills (Lans et al. 2014; Wals and Jickling 2002),

which is also denoted by CEO's throughout the world (Accenture 2010). These competencies are enacted, shaped, and further devolved by individuals (Wood 1991).

The process of implementing CSR in core business processes, which is denoted in the literature for achieving effective long-term CSR performance (e.g., Accenture 2010; Castka et al. 2004; Jamali 2008), is often managed by a select group of people (or sometimes even an individual); the CSR professional(s). These professionals bear the responsibility of effectively implementing CSR within the company. Their competencies will also likely influence the company's CSR performance in addition to important institutional and organizational factors and processes. The focus of this paper will be on the individual competencies of these professionals.

A relevant question for research and practice is therefore: *which individual competencies support effective CSR implementation?* This is important because on the one hand an answer to this question will provide CSR-committed companies the possibility to select suitable individuals to manage the implementation of CSR in their companies (cf. Accenture 2010). It will further help those professionals who are already working on CSR implementation, with key insights into the competencies they should have or should develop in order to promote higher levels of CSR implementation in their company. On the other hand, an answer to this question will increase our scientific insight into relevant individual CSR-related competencies, which can serve as a guide for future scientific research focusing on the management of change toward SD and the implementation of CSR in particular.

So far, studies that investigate individual competencies for CSR (implementation) are often conceptual (e.g., Dentoni et al. 2012) in nature, and oriented toward educational programs (e.g., De Haan 2006; Rieckmann 2012; Wiek et al. 2011a, b). Here, we performed a theoretical and empirical analysis of the individual CSR-related competencies that CSR professionals need in order to contribute to achieving effective CSR implementation in a corporate context.

To answer the above-mentioned question we performed a systematic literature review accompanied with an empirical study in which we interviewed 28 CSR directors and managers regarding their individual competencies in relation to CSR implementation. These interviews were designed to assess the extent to which these professionals recognize and agree with the competencies derived from our literature review and to identify other important individual CSR-related competencies. Because competencies can be examined at different levels (organizational, team, and individual level) and from different perspectives, we will first elaborate on the concept of individual competencies and explain how the concept is perceived in this study.

The concept of individual competence

According to Lans ([2009](#)) and Delamare Le Deist and Winterton ([2005](#)), three dominant approaches to the concept of competence emerged in recent decades. In the *behavioral-functionalistic approach* (Neumann [1979](#)) individual competencies are derived from detailed job descriptions and are described as simplified atomized behaviors and knowledge elements. This approach focuses on the actual tasks that must be performed and/or the challenges that must be overcome. This approach has become associated with behaviorism[1] and mastery learning due to its fragmentized description of competencies and its relationship with scientific management[2] (Mulder [2014](#)). However, a fundamental criticism of the behavioral-functionalistic approach to the concept of competence is that a list of atomized work descriptions does not necessarily indicate whether the professional is indeed able to accomplish the job efficiently in practice. Moreover, this approach has been criticized for providing a mechanistic view of work; ignoring the professional's autonomy and identity; undervaluing the role of tacit knowledge; and generating relatively conservative models of competence (Cheetham and Chivers [1996;](#) Eraut [1994](#)).

In response to these criticisms, a more *generic approach* to the concept of competence was developed (Eraut [1994](#)). This approach perceives individual competencies as underlying characteristics (e.g., knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or personal attributes) that distinguish successful performers from less successful performers, thereby placing the professional at the center of attention. A weakness of this generic approach, however, is its context-independent and therefore abstract description of competencies, which does not account for the complexity of the application of these knowledge elements and skills in a changing environment (Eraut [1994](#)).

Many recent interpretations of the concept of individual competence acknowledge the developmental and situated nature of professional practice and therefore provide a more comprehensive conceptualization (Delamare Le Deist and Winterton [2005](#); Wesselink et al. [2010](#)). This *comprehensive approach* of competence can be viewed as an integration of the functionalistic and generic approaches. In the comprehensive approach, individual competencies are perceived as a person's integrated performance-oriented ability to achieve specific objectives. In this approach, 'integrated' refers to the interrelated combination of

knowledge elements, skills, and attitudes (each of which can be seen as a specification of a competence), and the integration of these factors in the context where successful performance must occur (Mulder [2014](#)). With *knowledge* referring to a person's representation of facts, procedures, and principles about someone or something, *skills* describing important specific learned activities, and *attitudes* referring to a person's personal feeling, disposition, or position toward a person, an object or a subject.

Competencies for CSR

Heugens ([2006](#)) describes how individual CSR-related competencies can be translated into organizational CSR-related competencies and competitive advantages through the process of combining individual competencies with previously established organizational competencies. Yet, the question remains: which competencies should be developed? To date, some scholars have examined collective and organizational competencies for CSR (i.e., capabilities) (e.g., Nijhof et al. [2005](#); Ramachandran [2011](#)). With respect to individual CSR-related competencies educational researchers have proposed several competence specifications for educational purpose. For example, adopting a generic approach to competence, De Haan ([2006](#)) utilized the *Gestaltungskompetenz* (shaping competence) and composed a list of twelve competencies (such as foresighted thinking and interdisciplinary work) that are expected to enable active, reflective, and co-operative participation toward sustainable development. In Germany, these competencies are perceived to be the central objective of education for sustainable development (ESD) (De Haan [2006](#)).

Wiek et al. ([2011b](#)) recently applied a generic approach to the concept of competence and reviewed the educational literature regarding sustainability. They formulated the following five key competencies that can guide the development of academic programs for sustainability: systems thinking competence, anticipatory competence, normative competence, strategic competence, and interpersonal competence. Rieckmann ([2012](#)) performed an empirical study to specifically address individual CSR-related competencies. Rieckmann used a comprehensive approach to the concept of competence and conducted a Delphi study with 70 ESD experts from Europe and Latin America and formulated 12 key competencies for ESD. Systemic thinking, anticipatory thinking, and critical thinking were deemed by these experts to be the most important competencies.

These studies provide valuable insight into the initial individual competencies of CSR professionals. Although professional practice and behavior are dependent—at least in part—on prior education (Gürel and Potthoff [2006](#)),

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[1] Behaviorism is an approach to psychology that focusses on observable behavior instead of what is happening in the mind.

[2] Scientific management is a theory of management that seeks to improve organization's efficiency by utilizing scientific, engineering, and mathematical analysis.

other important work-related competencies are difficult to teach in a scholastic setting (Gulikers 2006). It is understandable that in these settings competencies are often specified in terms of distinct skills, knowledge, and attitude requirements, to facilitate the assessment of students' competences (Mulder 2014).

Work-related competencies usually develop through one's work experiences and by challenges experienced in one's professional life (Roe 2000). These higher-level and additional competencies have a purely developmental purpose (and no assessment purpose) and are therefore often described more comprehensively. Here, we combined insights from educational and managerial literature with insights from practice in order to obtain a broader empirical outlook on individual competencies for CSR implementation in a corporate environment.

Method

In this study we conducted both a theoretical and empirical exploration to answer the research question. We have chosen this approach because we first wanted to identify the relevant competencies and second, wanted to see to what extent these competencies are applied in CSR managers' practice. Moreover, using mixed methods of data collection to answer the research questions enhances the robustness of our study findings and compensates in part for limitations associated with using any one data collection method (Strauss and Corbin 1998). In the next section, we will present our theoretical exploration of key individual CSR-related competencies; specifically, we will elaborate upon the materials and methods used, and we will present the results of our literature analysis. Thereafter we will present our empirical exploration of key individual CSR-related competencies.

Theoretical Exploration: Systematic Literature Review

Materials and Methods

Our first step was to perform a literature review in order to determine the individual CSR-related competencies that have been reported in the scientific literature. This research method uses a reproducible, transparent procedure to identify the sources that will be included in the review and to evaluate what is currently known and reported regarding a certain issue (Fink 2010). The Web of Science database was used as our bibliographic source, as it covers scientific articles from a broad range of scientific disciplines, thus ensuring that the search was sufficiently comprehensive.

Our search strategy consisted of different building blocks (Table 1) and is similar to the strategy used by Casimir and Tobi (2011). We used an extensive list of search terms in order to ensure that our search for relevant peer-reviewed scientific articles was sufficiently broad. Only articles published from 2000 onwards were included in the sample, as scientific attention to antecedents and outcomes of CSR increased significantly around this period (Thomas and Nowak 2006). For practical reasons, we limited the search to articles that were written in English. The final search was performed on December 21, 2011 and resulted in 1,229 scientific articles.

We used the following criterion to select applicable articles: the articles had to address individual sustainability competencies or CSR-related competencies of either students or professionals. Although students and professionals differ in their competencies and competence levels (students or new graduates generally perform at a more novice level than professionals), earlier developed competencies and novice-leveled competencies are often called upon in combination with newly learned competencies when performing at advanced competence levels (Roe 2000). Therefore, we did not distinguish the level of competence, and we included articles regarding individual competencies that are taught in ESD programs in the literature review. We used the interviews, which we will elaborate later on in this paper, to specify and validate the competencies within a CSR professionals' practice.

The first author screened the titles, key words, and abstracts of the 1,229 articles identified in the search, and all articles that met any of the following criteria were excluded: *(1)* non-relevant subject matter (e.g., renewable energy, knowledge management, or effects of CSR/SD; $n = 1,008$) (e.g., Bond et al. 2010 and Kolodinsky et al. 2010); *(2)* a non-multi-dimensional perspective of sustainability/CSR (i.e., not referring to an economic, environmental, or social dimension; $n = 28$) (e.g., Ashby et al., 2009), as CSR involves the interrelation or balance between these three dimensions; *(3)* a focus on competencies at the organizational/team/urban/community level ($n = 53$) (e.g., Ramachandran 2011; Van Kleef and Roome 2007), as our review focused on individual competencies; or *(4)* a focus on a target group other than students or professionals (e.g., citizens, consumers, or countries; $n = 56$) (e.g., Gupta 2003; Leiserowitz et al. 2005), as the targeted group in this review was professionals working on CSR implementation and CSR-related challenges. Thus, only work-related competencies were perceived as being relevant. This first selection phase yielded 84 potentially relevant articles.

Next, the first and second authors independently reviewed the abstracts, titles, and key words of these 84 articles, again applying the above-mentioned inclusion and exclusion criteria. Differences between the researchers were discussed until agreement was reached, resulting in

22 articles that were read in depth. An additional four articles were excluded from the sample,[3] as it turned out they did not cover every dimension of sustainability or CSR (Csurgo et al. 2008; Wolcott et al. 2011) or did not address upcoming professionals (Brammer et al. 2007; Breu et al. 2005). Thus, the final sample contained 18 relevant articles (Table 2).

Data Analyses and Synthesis

We developed a coding scheme that matched the aim of the review. This coding scheme was used to analyze the content of each article in order to identify relevant statements. We performed a domain analysis using Delamare Le Deist and Winterton's (2005) model of competence to group-relevant statements. Accordingly, a multidimensional framework for work-related competencies was constructed. This framework is based on the comprehensive approach to the concept of competence and illustrates the interrelatedness of four domains of competence that are needed in a particular profession, namely a cognition-oriented competence domain, a functional-oriented competence domain, a social-oriented competence domain, and a meta-oriented competence domain.

The 'Cognition-oriented domain' is based on conceptual elements of competence (e.g., cognition, knowledge, and understanding). The 'Functional-oriented domain' is based on operational elements of competence (e.g., job-related skills and know-how). The 'Social-oriented domain' is based on elements of competencies that are linked to individual operational effectiveness in relation to other people. Finally, the 'Meta-oriented domain' is based on the personal conceptual attributes and values (e.g., reflection and learning to learn) that facilitate development of the other domains. Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005) stated that the competencies are not fixed; they influence one another and develop, stabilize, or decline in a specific organizational context. Moreover, although it is possible to separate each domain conceptually, one must be able to activate and use all four domains simultaneously and effectively in order to be competent.

Statements that reflect a common competence domain (i.e., the cognition-oriented, function-oriented, social-oriented, or meta-oriented domain) were selected and grouped by the first and second authors. Within each domain, all statements that describe a similar competence or competence specification were also grouped. These subgroups were then given a competence label and ranked according to the number of articles from which the statements were

derived. The resulting findings of the systematic literature review are presented below.

Results of the Theoretical Exploration

Sixteen of the 18 selected articles (Table 2) were educational in background. Eight articles described sustainability frameworks for education in specific occupations (articles 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 12; see Table 2), and one described different target groups (article 5 focused on top managers, company representatives, and the public; this review included only competencies regarding managers and company representatives). Five articles elaborated on education for sustainability from a more general perspective (articles 1, 9, 10, 14, and 18). One article described key skills and competencies for sustainability professionals (article 17), and one article described the merits of applying business ethics competency exams in management curricula (article 16). The sample also included two research articles in the field of management science: one article described management competencies that are related to good global corporate citizenship, a construct closely related to CSR (article 13), and one article described how international experience and a CEO's functional background can enhance corporate social performance (article 15).

Despite the 14 empirical articles that were included in the sample (most of which were case studies); none provided empirical evidence for the relationship between proposed CSR competence specifications and CSR implementation. Nevertheless, considerable similarities were identified in the CSR competence specifications mentioned in these articles.

The synthesis of the selected CSR competence specifications resulted in the following seven CSR-related competencies: *(C1) Anticipating CSR challenges; (C2) Understanding CSR-relevant systems and subsystems; (C3) Understanding drivers, standards, and regulations; (C4) Managing CSR programs and projects; (C5) Realizing CSR-supportive interpersonal processes; (C6) Employing CSR-supportive personal characteristics and affective attributes in CSR contexts; and (C7) Reflecting on personal CSR views and experiences.* See Table 3 for the definitions of these competencies, and see Table 4 for exemplar quotations.

Empirical Exploration and Validation: Interviews with CSR Professionals

Materials and Methods

The results of our review served as a useful starting point for empirically exploring key individual CSR-related

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[3] The total list of the articles included in the review can be derived through the first author.

Table 1 Search terms for competence and CSR/sustainability

Set	Search terms in 'Title' and 'Topic' fields
Competence	Competenc* OR Skill? OR Attitud* OR Knowledge OR Know-how OR 'Job requiremen*' OR Proficienc* OR Experience* OR 'Behavio?r criteri*' OR Qualification? OR power OR abilit* OR expertness OR readiness OR aptitude? OR dexterity* OR facult* OR capabilit* OR efficac* OR forc* OR strength OR capacit* OR efficienc* OR susceptibilit* OR cleverness OR energy OR talent? OR cogenc*
CSR/ sustainability	AND 'Corporate social responsibilit*' OR csr OR 'Social consciousness' OR 'Organi?ational social responsibilit*' OR 'Corporate social performance*' OR csp OR 'Corporate citizenship' OR 'Good corporate governance*' OR 'Ethical organi*ation*' OR 'Inclusive organi?ation*' OR 'Civil organi*ation*' OR 'Organi*ational moral philosophy' OR 'Organi?ational societal responsibilit*' OR 'Organi?ational moral obligation*' OR 'Corporate social responsiveness' OR 'Corporate public responsibilit*' OR 'Business ethic?' OR 'Corporate social investment?' OR 'Triple* bottom* line' OR 'Social action?' OR 'Public policy' OR 'Public policies' OR 'Stakeholder management' OR 'Social license' OR Sustainab*
Other	AND Language = (English) and Document type = all document types[a] AND Year of Publication = 2000-present

Note: The question mark (?) is a wild card that can be replaced by one letter only (or no letter). The asterisk (*) is a sign that can be replaced by any string in a single run. Quotation marks ensure a search for the precise term as enclosed between the quotation marks

[a] The search was later refined by checking the "Articles" and "Reviews" boxes under "Refine results: document types"

competencies for CSR implementation in a corporate context. The aim of our empirical exploration was to: (1) identify other important CSR-related competencies as they are perceived in practice, and (2) examine whether the CSR-related competencies that were derived from the review are also deemed to be important by CSR professionals in the corporate world, thereby supporting and validating the theoretical results.

We interviewed 28 CSR professionals (primarily CSR directors and managers) from 20 Dutch companies in various sectors in order to obtain a basis for validating the theoretically derived competencies in several corporate settings (See Table 5 for specifications). We selected these companies using the annual Sustainability Transparency Benchmark from 2012.[4] This benchmark is prepared annually by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and provides insight into the quality and quantity of CSR

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[4] Visit http://www.transparantiebenchmark.nl/bedrijven for The Transparency Benchmark 2012.

reporting by Dutch companies. Thus, this benchmark also provides an indication of how active these companies are with respect to CSR-related issues. The companies included in the benchmark include the 550 largest Dutch companies and organizations (based on the number of employees and/or the highest turnover). The 100 highest ranked companies were contacted, as we perceived these companies to be the most active in terms of CSR. Each company's principal CSR professional (i.e., the individual responsible for developing the company's CSR policy and strategy and/or responsible for implementing CSR) was identified and invited to participate in the study.

To minimize any potential bias, the first author interviewed each participant using a standardized semi-structured interview format that was developed based on the review results. Each interview continued until it reached saturation (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The interviewer addressed the following topics sequentially: (1) basic background information (e.g., education, age, and prior work experience); (2) CSR-related competencies that were applied by the professionals and which they *themselves* (in their CSR role) deemed important for effective CSR implementation (for example, "What do you need to *know*, what must you *be able to do*, and *what kind of person* do you need to be in order to successfully integrate CSR in your company?"); and (3) a reflection on the CSR-related competencies that were identified from the comprehensive review.

The results of our systematic literature review were presented after the interviewer explored the CSR-related competencies that the CSR professional found to be personally important. This approach enabled the interviewee to propose relevant CSR-related competencies without being influenced by the competencies derived from the review. In addition, these initial competencies provided an indication of the importance of proposed competencies to CSR implementation, as we assumed that the interviewees would first address the competencies that they believe are most important in their CSR role.

Data Analyses and Synthesis

We performed a content analysis of the interview transcripts. The software program ATLAS.ti was used to organize and analyze the transcripts (for a detailed description of this program, see Friese 2012). First, all interview transcripts were read thoroughly to identify meaningful passages in the interviewees' responses to the interview questions. Next, the first and third authors independently assigned codes to excerpts from the transcript. We used the seven competencies derived from the comprehensive review as coding categories in order to group these excerpts. We added an eighth category—which we

Table 2 Overview of the 18 articles reviewed and the competencies for which they provided statements

Article no.	Authors	Title	Journal	Empirical/ conceptual article	Approach to competence	Competence
1	Batterman et al. (2011)	Development and application of competencies for graduate programs in energy and sustainability	Journal of Professional issues in Engineering Education and Practice	Empirical (case study)	Functionalistic	C1, C3, C4, C5
2	Bremer and López-Franco (2006)	Sustainable development: 10 years of experience at ITESM's graduate level	Journal of Cleaner Production	Empirical (case study)	Generic	C4, C5, C5
3	Burkhardt-Holm and Chebbi (2008)	Master's degree in sustainable development in Switzerland, the first master course comprising three faculties. Environmental Science and Pollution Research	Environmental Science and Pollution Research	Empirical (case study)	Generic	C1, C2, C3, C4, C5
4	Fisk and Ahearn (2006)	Creating policy analysis skills in postgraduate engineering for sustainable development	Journal of Cleaner Production	Empirical (case study)	Functionalistic	C2, C7
5	Gao et al. (2006)	Education for regional sustainable development: experiences from the education framework of HHCEPZ project	Journal of Cleaner Production	Empirical (case study)	Generic	C1, C4
6	Gürel (2010)	Explorations in teaching sustainable design: a studio experience in interior design/ architecture	International Journal of Art and Design Education	Empirical (case study)	Functionalistic	C1, C2, C4, C5
7	Hansmann et al. (2010)	Qualifications for contributing to sustainable development a survey of environmental sciences graduates	Gaia-ecological Perspectives for Science and Society	Empirical (case studies)	Generic	C2, C4, C5, C6,
8	Hopkinson et al. (2008)	Sustainable graduates: linking formal, informal and campus curricula to embed education for sustainable development in the student learning experience	Environmental Education Research	Empirical (case study)	Generic	C1, C4, C5, C6
9	Kuckertz and Wagner (2010)	The influence of sustainability orientation on entrepreneurial intentions—investigating the role of business experience	Journal of Business Venturing	Empirical (cross-sectional study)	Generic	C1
10	Macris and Georgakellos (2006)	A new teaching tool in education for sustainable development: Ontology-based knowledge networks for environmental training	Journal of Cleaner Production	Conceptual	Functionalistic	C1, C2, C4, C5
11	Manoliadis (2009)	Education for Sustainability: Experiences from Greece	Journal of Professional Issues in Engineering Education and Practice	Empirical (cases studies)	Functionalistic	C1, C2, C3, C5
12	McAloone (2007)	A competence-based approach to sustainable innovation teaching: Experiences within a new engineering program	Journal of Mechanical Design	Empirical (case study)	Functionalistic	C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6
13	Pies et al. (2010)	Value creation, management competencies, and global corporate citizenship: An ordonomic approach to business ethics in the age of globalization	Journal of Business Ethics	Conceptual	Functionalistic	C1, C3, C4, C5

Table 2 continued

Article no.	Authors	Title	Journal	Empirical/conceptual article	Approach to competence	Competence
14	Segalas et al. (2009)	What has to be learnt for sustainability? A comparison of bachelor engineering education competencies at three European universities	Sustainability Science	Empirical (case studies)	Generic	C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7
15	Slater and Dixon-Fowler (2009)	CEO international assignment experience and corporate social performance	Journal of Business Ethics	Empirical (cross-sectional study)	Generic	C2, C5, C6
16	Spurgin (2004)	The goals and merits of a business ethics competency exam	Journal of Business ethics	Empirical (case study)	Functionalistic	C1, C2, C5
17	Wiek et al. (2011a)	Moving forward on competence in sustainability research and problem solving	Environment	Conceptual	Generic	C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6
18	Wiek et al. (2011b)	Key competencies in sustainability: a reference framework for academic program development	Sustainability Science	Conceptual (review)	Generic	C1, C2, C3, C4, C5

called 'Others'—to account for interviewees' statements that involve new competencies or competence specifications that were not covered by the other coding categories. More than one code could be assigned to a single excerpt.

Cohen's Kappa (Cohen 1960) was calculated for each category (i.e., code) and revealed good agreement between the two coders, with Kappa values ranging from 0.61 to 0.79 (see Altman 1991, p. 404; Landis and Koch 1977). Differences between the coders were discussed until agreement was reached. The two coders also discussed all statements that were coded as 'Other', and these statements were then either assigned to one of the other coding categories or grouped and assigned a new competence label.

To improve the robustness of our study findings, we presented our initial findings to a separate group of CSR directors and managers (who were not interviewed) and then gave them the opportunity to provide feedback. The integrated results—in which both review data and interview data are considered—are presented in the next section.

Results

Our analysis of the interview transcripts and the synthesis of the seven competencies derived from the systematic literature review resulted in a final list of eight individual CSR-related competencies. These eight competencies and their definitions are listed below based on the competence

domain that they emphasize (see Table 4 for example quotations).

Cognition-Oriented Competence Domain

(1) Foresight Thinking: Anticipating Future Developments Regarding CSR-Related Challenges

This competence was confirmed by all 28 CSR professionals; moreover, seven of the 28 CSR professionals proposed this competence—or elements thereof—before viewing the competencies that were identified from the review. This competence was deemed to be important in cases in which the professional was responsible for developing the company's CSR strategy. *Competence definition:* The CSR professional must be able to mentally construct scenarios to describe how CSR-related challenges will develop in the future and how these challenges might affect the company. This definition includes the ability to think critically and anticipate potential consequences for future local and global CSR-related challenges of decisions made by the company today.

(2) Systems Thinking: Understanding the Interdependency Between Systems and Subsystems that are Relevant to CSR Practice

Nearly all of the CSR professionals (27 out of 28) confirmed this competence; ten CSR professionals proposed this competence—or elements thereof—before viewing the

Table 3 CSR competencies derived from the systematic literature review

Competence label	Competence definition
Cognition-oriented competence domain	
(C1) Anticipating future developments regarding CSR-related challenges	This includes the ability to mentally construct pictures of how CSR-related issues, CSR-related behaviors, key concepts, and theories will develop in the future. This competence also includes the ability to think critically and anticipate potential consequences of organizational and individual actions
(C2) Understanding of the interdependency between systems and subsystems relevant to CSR practice	This includes the ability to mentally visualize, understand, and analyze complex dynamic systems and issues across different dimensions and temporal scales of CSR-related issues. This suggests that when addressing CSR challenges CSR professionals need to be able to identify relevant systems and subsystems and understand and reflect upon their interdependencies. Moreover, CSR professionals must be able to evaluate the implications of solutions to CSR challenges on those systems
(C3) Understanding CSR drivers, CSR standards, and CSR regulations	When faced with CSR challenges, CSR professionals must understand how to apply and cope with important industrial, national and international regulations such as collective industrial standards, integrity pacts, and political processes. In addition to these legal aspects, CSR professionals must also understand social drivers and normative fundamentals of CSR challenges. Moreover, they must have the ability to construct functional rules (e.g., a code of conduct) and incentives in order to regulate the CSR-related behaviors of others
Functional-oriented competence domain	
(C4) Managing CSR projects and programs.	This includes the ability to translate strategy into concrete actions and correct misuse and pitfalls of the CSR concept. It also includes the ability to plan, implement, and manage projects, decisions, and strategies that support CSR. Moreover, CSR professionals must take responsibility for their company and society, take action despite inconclusive evidence, build critical alliances, develop and apply solutions to practical, logical, and CSR-related problems, raise funds, write CSR-related reports and proposals, and present results

Table 3 continued

Competence label	Competence definition
Social-oriented competence domain	
(C5) Realizing CSR-supportive interpersonal processes	This includes the ability to motivate, enable, and facilitate collaboration and cooperation in working on CSR challenges. CSR professionals must: be persuasive; network (locally and globally); be able to identify a broad group of stakeholders; have good communication and networking skills; and work well in multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural collaborations. Moreover, CSR professionals must successfully manage, negotiate, and represent their company's interest while showing respect, navigating, and mapping distinctive ideas and inputs of stakeholders
Meta-oriented competence domain	
(C6) Employing CSR-supportive personal characteristics and affective attributes in CSR contexts	These attributes are the basic ingredients of an employee's actions. CSR professionals must be ethical, empathic, committed, enthusiastic, creative, open-minded, flexible, patient, persistent, and pragmatic in their work
(C7) Reflecting on personal CSR views and experiences	This includes the ability to recognize and challenge one's own prior ideas, habits, and assumptions, as well as to construct meaning from this self-evaluation. Thus, CSR professionals must use a self-evaluative and self-learning approach when working on CSR challenges

The competencies are presented according to the competence domain they emphasize and are ranked within each domain according to the numbers of articles from which the statements were derived

competencies that were derived from the review. However, in addition to the externally oriented definition that was derived from the systematic literature review (see Table 3); the CSR professionals also identified an internally oriented component to this competence. *Competence definition:* Systems thinking is the ability to identify and understand relevant socio-ecological systems from different domains and disciplines and reflect on their interdependency.

This competence has both an internal component and an external component. Here, 'external component' refers to the ability to have a system-wide perspective on CSR challenges. Thus, the CSR professional must be familiar with relevant CSR themes and should be able to understand the interdependency of these themes (e.g., the '3Ps', which describes the relationship between People, Planet, and Profit). Moreover, the CSR professional must understand

the role of the supply chain and how the company should work together with other actors in its supply chain to address common CSR challenges. Furthermore, the CSR professional must understand how a particular commitment by the company can affect how the company contributes to local and global CSR challenges.

The 'internal component' reflects the notion that the company is perceived as a system comprised several interdependent subsystems (i.e., business units and disciplines). In this internal perspective, 'systems thinking' refers to the ability of a CSR professional to analyze CSR-related challenges in an interdisciplinary manner. Thus, the CSR professional must be able to identify and understand the company's various business units, their interdependency, and how they together contribute to the company's CSR program and CSR challenges at large.

(3) Instrumental Understanding: Understanding CSR-Relevant Standards and Regulations

The CSR professionals noted the presence of both an instrumental component and a value-driven component in the competence "*Understanding CSR drivers, CSR standards, and CSR regulations*" that was identified from the comprehensive review. The CSR professionals perceived these components to involve two distinct competencies. The first competence refers to the ethically oriented component and is described below under 'Ethical normative competencies'.

The second competence refers to the instrumental component and is labeled as '*Understanding CSR-relevant standards and regulations*'. This competence was confirmed by 20 of the 28 CSR professionals; seven of these CSR professionals proposed this competence—or elements thereof—before viewing the competencies derived from the review. *Competence definition:* When faced with CSR challenges, a CSR professional must understand how the company should cope with the challenges and apply important industrial regulations (e.g., collective industrial standards and integrity pacts), national and international regulations, political processes, and corporate governance (such as codes of conduct). Moreover, the CSR professional should be able to contribute to the development of these standards for example by participating in roundtable meetings.

Functional-Oriented Competence Domain

(4) CSR Management Competencies

The competence '*Managing CSR projects and programs*' (as defined in the literature review) was recognized by all 28 CSR professionals, even though they indicated that the

specification of the competence included competencies that were related to leadership and management. In addition, the CSR professionals emphasized the importance of CSR entrepreneurial competencies, which were not included in the competencies that were derived from the review. Thus, the competence specifications related to this competence can be divided into three groups.

(4a) CSR Leadership Competencies This competence was confirmed by 14 of the 28 CSR professionals; nine of these CSR professionals proposed this competence—or elements thereof—before viewing the competencies derived from the review. This first group includes CSR leadership competencies. *Competence definition:* The CSR professional must be able to develop a CSR vision and give the company's CSR program direction. This includes being prepared to take risks and seeks new ways to pursue CSR (i.e., being a pioneer) and thinking about future CSR developments, as well as how those developments might affect the company's current CSR program.

(4b) Identifying and Realizing CSR-Related Business Opportunities This competence was confirmed by 27 of the 28 CSR professionals; 25 of these CSR professionals proposed this competence—or elements thereof—before viewing the competencies derived from the review. *Competence definition:* A CSR professional should also have entrepreneurial competencies. Thus, the CSR professional should be alert to trends in CSR and should be able to translate and realize these developments into business opportunities for the company. In order to do so, the CSR professional must have at least some business, organizational, and sector-specific knowledge, and the CSR professional must be able to make a business case for CSR. At the same time, the professional must not lose sight of the bigger picture (i.e., tackling local and global CSR challenges) and should therefore avoid the trap of thinking in terms of short-term financial gains. Moreover, to realize CSR-related business opportunities, the professional must be able to deal with the company's formal and informal decision-making processes and its organizational politics and culture.

(4c) Managing CSR Implementation This competence was confirmed by all 28 CSR professionals; 24 CSR professionals proposed this competence—or elements thereof—before viewing the competencies derived from the review. *Competence definition:* These change management-related and program management—related competencies include the ability to lead the transition toward CSR, to develop crucial alliances with important individuals both within and outside the company, and to deal with 'resistance to change' by inspiring and motivating others.

The CSR professional must be able to translate a strategy into individual milestones, targets, and concrete actions. The CSR professional must also be able to organize, facilitate, and manage this process and the people involved, all within the specified timeframe and budget. To do so, the professional must have good problem-solving skills, and he/she must be able to prepare reports and present results in a clear and convincing manner.

Social-Oriented Competence Domain

(5) Interpersonal Competencies: Realizing CSR-Supportive Interpersonal Processes in CSR Implementation

This competence was recognized by all 28 CSR professionals, and all 28 professionals proposed this competence—or elements thereof—before viewing the competencies derived from the review. *Competence definition:* The CSR professional must have good social, communication, and networking skills, as he/she must be able to raise awareness of CSR, as well as challenge and stimulate ownership of CSR in others. Moreover, the CSR professional should be able to coach and help others integrate CSR into their daily work. Finally, the CSR professional must be able to work well in multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural collaborations, and he/she must be able to represent the company's interests while mapping and showing respect to distinctive ideas and inputs of stakeholders.

Meta-oriented Competence Domain

(6) Personal Attributes and Attitudes: Employing CSR-Supportive Personal Characteristics And Attitudes

This competence was confirmed by all 28 CSR professionals; 26 CSR professionals proposed this competence—or elements thereof—before viewing the competencies derived from the review. *Competence definition:* In implementing CSR in his/her company, the CSR professional must deal with various stakeholders, each of whom can have their own unique interests. Moreover, CSR implementation is a process of change that involves changing people's mindset. Thus, CSR professionals often encounter resistance to change and will need to possess certain personal characteristics and attitudes in order to address these challenges. The most commonly mentioned features include patience, resilience, flexibility, a realistic attitude, pragmatism, innovativeness, empathy, and a positive attitude. These features are similar to the features that were derived from our systematic literature review.

(7) Personal Value-Driven Competencies

An important remark made by the CSR professionals regarding the list of CSR-related competencies that we derived from the literature review is that the competencies seemed to be somewhat instrumental. The CSR professionals stressed the importance of competencies that are more related to one's ethical values; the professionals felt that these competencies are specifically important to CSR professionals. The analysis of the interview data resulted in three sets of competencies that are related to the CSR professional's personal ethical values.

(7a) Ethical Normative Competencies
This competence was confirmed by 24 of the 28 CSR professionals; 16 of these CSR professionals proposed this competence—or elements thereof—before viewing the competencies derived from the review. As mentioned above, the CSR professionals noted the presence of an instrumental component and a value-driven component in the competence 'Understanding CSR drivers, CSR standards, and CSR regulations' as defined in the systematic literature review. This competence involves the value-driven component and is related to the content of CSR challenges. *Competence definition:* The CSR professional is convinced of the urgency of CSR challenges and is intrinsically driven (i.e., intrinsic motivated) to address these challenges. This competence involves the ability to apply one's personal ethical standards and values while assessing CSR-related issues.

(7b) Balancing Personal Ethical Values and Business Objectives
This competence was confirmed by 20 of the 28 CSR professionals; 15 of these CSR professionals proposed this competence—or elements thereof—before viewing the competencies derived from the review. *Competence definition:* This competence is functionally oriented and includes the ability to strike a balance between idealism and pragmatism. Thus, the CSR professional must have the adaptive capacity to pursue both financial objectives and CSR objectives without losing sight of (or overstepping) his/her personal ethical boundaries and values.

(7c) Realizing Self-regulated CSR-Related Behavior and Active Involvement
This competence was suggested by 25 of the 28 CSR professionals; nine of these CSR professionals proposed this competence—or elements thereof—before viewing the competencies derived from the review. *Competence definition:* This competence involves the ability to apply one's personal ethical standards and values to CSR implementation. The CSR professional feels personally responsible for behaving

Table 4 Integrated results: CSR-related competencies and supporting exemplar quotations extracted from the articles reviewed and the interview transcripts

Competence	Exemplar quotation	Source
1. Anticipating future developments regarding CSR-related challenges	"Anticipatory competence is the ability to collectively analyze, evaluate, and craft rich 'pictures' of the future related to sustainability issues and sustainability problem-solving frameworks"	Wiek et al. (2011b, p. 207)
	"You should especially realize how much you do not know. More importantly, you should realize that the future can go in several direction, which can vary dramatically. Therefore you should think of possible scenarios, analyze them, look at your options and make decision based on the scenario that is most likely to occur"	Interviewee N, Manager Sustainability
	"This has to do with the mission to understand what is going to happen in 5 or 15 years and translate it back into concrete actions for today. So foresight thinking is very very important"	Interviewee E1, Director sustainability
2. Understanding of the interdependency between systems and subsystems relevant for CSR practice.	"The ability to understand the interactions of natural, societal, and economic processes in accomplishing the sustainable exploitation and utilisation of resources."	Burkhardt-Holm and Chebbi (2008, p. 139)
	"Ability to identify systems, to think holistically in order to be able to handle complexity and balance between different dimensions of SD (to discern patterns, to understand cause-effect relationships, to understand conceptual models of systems, etc.)"	Segalas et al. (2009, p. 24)
	"CSR departments deal with different business groups. So you have a "unusual" position within the company and you always have to have that helicopter view on things. For example, imagine you have to give a business group advice on sustainability. You should realize that certain advices can be detrimental for other business groups. Therefore, you must understand how the internal and external system of this company operates"	Interviewee R, Sustainability manager, Engagement and Learning
3. Understanding CSR drivers, CSR standards, and CSR regulations.	"Understand the principles and importance of environmental legislation and identify the authorities responsible for its enforcement"	Manoliadis (2009, p. 72.
	"Know the social context (current state, discourse, politics) and theoretical approaches concerning sustainable development as an overall concept and mission. Know normative fundamentals, such as justice, environmental ethics, and the accompanying problems. Know social and societal drivers, and the utilisation conflicts arising from these"	Manoliadis 2009, p. 72)
	"I have noticed that the technical component in this job is getting more and more important. It is important for me to know all about important regulations such as ISO 26000, GRI indicators for CSR reporting, Dow Jones indicators for the Dow Jones Sustainability Index"	Interviewee I, Manager CSR

Table 4 continued

Competence	Exemplar quotation	Source
4a. CSR leadership competencies	"Strategic competence is the ability to collectively design and implement interventions… This capacity requires an intimate understanding of strategic concepts…; In simple terms, this competence is about being able to 'get things done"	Wiek et al., 2011b, p. 210.
	"The people who are driving CSR often have a "free role" within their company. The role is very amorphous. This is an important feature and these professionals need to be able to deal with this. They have a close relationship with the Board and at the same time are very connected with the operation; Strategy and operation are very connected for these professionals"	Interviewee A1, Manager CSR and sustainable development
	"You need a leader that is working on the sustainability strategy or vision. This person should be able to motivate and inspire others, should be able to see, I don't know 5, 10, 15 years ahead, and be able to translate that into what is happening now, and provide the guidance for others"	Interviewee E1, Director sustainability
4b. Identifying and realizing CSR-related business opportunity	"In a sense it is a bit of entrepreneurship. The financial component, which should be included in your list, is gaining more importance in this job. I think we are slowly but surely coming to a point that you should be able to understand business models and know how your company can make money with CSR"	Interviewee I, Manager CSR
	"I think that sustainability programs should finance itself. Meaning, there should be a business case behind the sustainability program, in that raising funds is no longer an issue"	Interviewee J, Program manager Sustainability and Advisor Sustainability
4c. Managing CSR implementation	"… formulate questions, plan projects, provide substantive and methodological guidance, integrate different viewpoints, and present results effectively"	Burkhardt-Holm and Chebbi (2008, p. 139)
	"you need someone who is pragmatic, is able to translate the sustainability program into individual mile stones, overall objectives, and targets. Who is able to translate these targets into concrete activities, assign people to these activities and set the budget. In addition you need someone who is able to manage all this, who is not necessarily the same person."	Interviewee L, Global director sustainable sourcing development,
5. Realizing CSR-supportive interpersonal processes in CSR integration	"The important role that social and communication skills play for contributing to sustainable development was concompanyed"	Hansmann et al. (2010, p. 283)
	"This job is very much about finding common ground between a range of different actors. I do not know exactly how to name this competence, but is very often busy with communicating, lobbying and convincing others"	Interviewee B1, Group coordinator corporate responsibility
	"For me, this job is very much about people. I find it very important that you are able to convince others of the importance of CSR. You collaborate a lot with others, you need to know what triggers others and what are important cultural differences"	Interviewee G2, Sustainability officer

Table 4 continued

Competence	Exemplar quotation	Source
6. Employing CSR-supportive personal characteristics and attitudes	"…perseverance, hardheadedness, and patience were most important, followed by enthusiasm, commitment, and clear goals or visions (…) These responses show that sustainability-oriented values and personal involvement are important components of … environmental problem-solving ability"	Hansmann et al. (2010, p. 283)
	"The people who are leading CSR are solid and autonomous thinkers. They have a clear view on things, not that they do not listen to others, but they have strong opinions about things. They are often authentic or original thinkers. They do not do or say things because others do so. So they are somewhat stubborn"	Interviewee A1, Manager CSR and sustainable development
	"I often say that if you want to drive your company towards sustainability, you will have to learn how to walk. It is not about how you fall in case of resistance, rather it is about how to stand up and move forward again. Resilience is the word I am looking for"	Interviewee O, Senior advisor and strategist Sustainability
	"You have to have perseverance because you will often encounter people who are not willing to change immediately. Also, because my company operated internationally, it also has to response to local challenges in a manner that fits that particular context. Thus, you should be flexible as a CSR professional because the same "solution "may not help in that particular context"	Interviewee T, Manager Global Sustainable Development
7a. Ethical normative competencies	"It often comes back to your personal values. For me CSR should be something that is embedded within yourself. What are your values? Something that you are intrinsic motivated about, and which is not forced upon you"	Interviewee D2, Manager Portfolio and Innovation
	"you should fundamentally believe that a company or an organization should take into account its environment. You should believe that in life people should do the right things, which means you should take into account stakeholders' perspective on things. You should be intrinsic driven, You should not work in this job function if you are driven by carrier, progress or sales. That will not work"	Interviewee Q, Director Corporate Communication and CSR
7b. Balancing personal ethical values and business objectives	"I am constantly stressing addressing global sustainability challenges. However, you are working for a company, so you should also safeguard the continuity of the company. It is about balancing opposites. I sometimes felt that I had to make my personal values about sustainability digestible for the business context. My former CEO, who strongly believes in sustainability, sometimes called me his "internal NGO"	Interviewee I, Manager CSR

Table 4 continued

Competence	Exemplar quotation	Source
7c. Realizing self-regulated CSR-related behavior and active involvement.	"The leadership style from sustainability "leaders" like Al Gore,, the guy from Patagonia, and the guys from Unilever, their leadership styles facilitates the development of activities but mainly before the facilitating happens you need to inspire others, and you inspire by driving initiatives. And this is what these people have done. This means that you sometimes need to execute an initiative yourself, so you provide those who need to execute them with examples or you need to inspire others with what others have done. You do not have to do it, but you need to show what others have done and how they have done it and probably help with the translation to your own organization"	Interviewee E1, Director sustainability
8. Reflecting on personal CSR views and experiences.	"Self-learning' and 'Ability to reflect on the professional role and responsibility as well as citizenship in relation to SD in a structured way"	Segalas et al. (2009, p. 24)
	"You should reflect on your own actions. You must be able to put things in perspective otherwise you can get really frustrated because you want and you know your company should act more rapidly to address sustainability challenges, such as climate change, than it does"	Interviewee S, Director Corporate Responsibility
	"Reflecting on your own actions and assumption is not only important for CSR-related jobs. In any job you should always reflect on how you went about doing thing, what the effects were, how and why you should do things differently the next time, and what lessons you can learn from this. This is a competence that is very embedded in me and how I conduct my job"	Interviewee B2, Development manager and Lawyer

ethically and assumes this responsibility. The CSR professional is actively involved in the implementation of CSR by being action-oriented and decisive; the CSR professional also serves as a role model for others by performing CSR-related activities. This competence is functionally oriented and is interpreted in practice as the congruence between what you stand for, what you say, and what you do.

(8) Reflection Competence: Reflecting on Personal CSR Views and Experiences

This competence was confirmed by 24 of the 28 CSR professionals; only one of these CSR professionals proposed this competence—or elements thereof—before viewing the competencies derived from the review. *Competence definition:* This competence includes the ability to recognize and challenge one's own prior ideas, habits, and assumptions, as well as the ability to derive meaning from this self-evaluation. Thus, CSR professionals use self-evaluation and self-learning approaches when working on CSR challenges.

Conclusions and Discussion

The synthesis of the review and the interview data resulted in the following eight individual CSR-related competencies for CSR implementation: *(1) Anticipating CSR challenges; (2) Understanding CSR-relevant systems and subsystems; (3) Understanding CSR-relevant standards; (4) CSR management competencies, including (4a) Leading CSR programs, (4b) Managing CSR programs, and (4c) Identifying and realizing CSR-related business opportunities; (5) Realizing CSR-supportive interpersonal processes; (6) Employing CSR-supportive personal characteristics and attitudes; (7) Personal value-driven competencies, including (7a) Ethical normative competencies, (7b) Balancing personal ethical values and business objectives, and (7c) Realizing self-regulated CSR-related behavior and active involvement; and (8) Reflecting on personal CSR views and experiences.*

These competencies are interrelated and applied in an integrated manner in practice (Delamare Le Deist and Winterton's 2005) as the example of Starbucks' efforts to improve the sustainability of their coffee supply makes

Table 5 CSR professionals' specifications

Company	Interviewee's ID	Gender	Age	Job title	Job experience (years)	Sector[a]
A	A1	Male	47	Manager CSR and Sustainable Development	7.5	Banks and Insurance
	A2	Male	34	Business Developer Sustainability	6	Banks and Insurance
B	B1	Male	38	Group Coordinator Corporate Responsibility	4	Service
	B2	Female	44	Development Manager and Lawyer	16	Service
C	C1	Male	48	Manager HR Europe	13	Retail
	C2	Male	36	Manager CSR & Quality	2	Retail
D	D1	Female	50	Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability Lead and Health manager	7.5	Service
	D2	Female	50	Manager Portfolio & Innovation	10	Service
E	E1	Male	40	Director Sustainability	6	Consumer products
	E2	Female	39	Sustainability Manager supply	8	Consumer products
F	F1	Male	55	Manager Compliance	4	Service
	F2	Male	27	Compliance Officer	2	Service
G	G1	Female	48	Program manager CSR	2.5	Banks and Insurance
	G2	Male	48	Sustainability Officer	5	Banks and Insurance
H	H1	Male	43	Director Sourcing & Sustainability	2	Transport
	H2	Male	33	Project Manager Sustainable Contracting	1.5	Transport
I	I	Female	40	Manager CSR	5	Food and Drink
J	J	Male	34	Program Manager Sustainability and Advisor Sustainability	2	Service
K	K	Male	42	Manager CSR	3	Energy, Oil, and Gas
L	L	Male	57	Global Director Sustainable Sourcing Development	18	Food and Drink
M	M	Female	43	Corporate Responsibility Officer	1	Service
N	N	Female	36	Manager Sustainability	3	Energy, Oil, and Gas
O	O	Male	44	Senior Advisor and Strategist Sustainability	17	Banks and Insurance
P	P	Male	53	Manager Safety, Health, Environment, & Quality	5	Food and Drink
Q	Q	Male	50	Director Corporate Communication & CSR	12	Technology
R	R	Female	49	Sustainability Manager, Engagement, & Learning	20	Industrial
S	S	Female	45	Director Corporate Responsibility	1	Service
T	T	Female	40	Manager Global Sustainable Development	3	Food and Drink

[a] Sector categorization is based on The Transparency Benchmark 2012

clear. Starbucks is faced with a challenging coffee market (Lee et al. 2007). They are specialized in specialty coffee and are operating on a market where market prices for coffee beans are down due to the oversupply of lower-grade coffee. This makes it hard for coffee farmers to earn sufficient money to stay in business. Starbucks success depends on a steady supply of high-quality coffee beans, making the company therefore highly interdependent with the coffee farmers. Starbucks started educating and providing loans to the farmers to help secure farmers' livelihood. As such, Starbucks is now contributing to a more sustainable supply chain by addressing their social responsibility (Lee et al. 2007). This example shows that CSR professionals needed to employ several competencies simultaneously. They needed to have (1) foresighted thinking to identify potential CSR-related challenges for their business, (2) systems thinking to acknowledge the interdependency between Starbucks and other important

actors within the coffee supply chain (e.g., farmers), (3) business-oriented and *personal value-oriented* competencies to think of an intervention that is beneficial for both the company and the farmers; (4) and finally active involvement and management competencies to ensure that the intervention is properly implemented.

Several patterns emerged when we looked at the study results more closely. First, taking Delamare Le Deist and Winterton's (2005) perspective on the concept of competence, the articles that we reviewed seem to emphasize cognition-oriented competencies for CSR; nearly every article contained explicit statements regarding knowledge requirements. An emphasis that was also signified by Rieckmann (2012). However, although the CSR professionals recognized and acknowledged all seven competencies derived from the systematic literature review—including the cognition-oriented competencies—they highlighted particularly non-cognitive competencies that are needed for successful interpersonal processes and for realizing CSR-related business opportunities; they also highlighted specific CSR-supportive personal characteristics and attitudes.

Second, because CSR is highly normative concept, one would expect the literature to report more about the personal and ethical attitudes and values that are needed when addressing CSR-related challenges; however, this was not the case in the reviewed articles; only seven of the 18 articles mentioned relevant attitudes. On the other hand, the interviewed CSR professionals particularly stressed the importance of competencies related to their personal values, including being intrinsically driven, being able to balance personal ethical values and business objectives, and identifying CSR challenges and taking responsibility for those challenges (cf. Rieckmann 2012). The latter competence is related to what is referred to as "action competence" in ESD literature. Action competence refers to the moral transformation from a passive attitude with respect to sustainability issues into an active and engaged attitude, affecting all aspects of an individual's life (Lans et al. 2014; Rieckmann 2012). Most studies on action competence are theoretical in nature. Our empirical findings provide support to formulate a more practical interpretation of this concept, namely "actively engaging oneself in the process of CSR implementation". It could be that compared to educational settings, in a business context more emphasis is put on proactive involvement because it can help CSR professionals take that next step in actually implementing their company's CSR program. Future research could provide more insights into the role of action competence in realizing effective CSR implementation.

Finally, the third pattern that emerged from our findings is that the CSR professionals interviewed proposed additional CSR-related competencies (e.g., *Leading and managing CSR programs, Identifying and realizing CSR-related business opportunities, and Active involvement*), that were not represented fully in our systematic literature review. Thus, at the time of the review, important business-oriented individual competencies were not being researched in the context of CSR. A recent study regarding sustainable entrepreneurship (i.e., the contribution of entrepreneurial endeavors to CSR) concluded that pursuing sustainable entrepreneurship includes both sustainability competencies and entrepreneurial competencies (Lans et al. 2014), thereby indicating the importance of including business-oriented competencies when driving change toward CSR in a corporate context. Both of these perspectives were taken into account in the interviews that we conducted in the present study.

A possible reason for the difference between the competencies found in the literature and the competencies proposed by the CSR professionals regards companies' maturity in CSR. A thorough implementation of CSR is a continuous process in which several distinct stages can be found (Maon et al. 2009). Often in the first stages of CSR implementation (sensitize stage), CSR professionals have to raise awareness of and gather support for CSR within their companies. After an explicit CSR strategy is chosen by board of directors, CSR professionals need to assess their company's societal role, establish a vision and working definition of CSR, assess their company's current CSR status, and (help) develop an integrated strategic plan for CSR (unfreeze stage). Next, CSR professionals need to manage and evaluate the change toward CSR (move stage), which in due time can become part of their company's core systems, culture, and values (refreeze stage; Maon et al. 2009). In each stage there is a different emphasis on the competencies that are required of CSR professionals.

Taking the process of CSR implementation into account, the results of the systematic literature review seem to focus on the initial stages of CSR implementation in which CSR professionals are working on positioning CSR within the company, and therefore need to know a lot about CSR (cognition-oriented competencies) and to be able to convince others of its importance (interpersonal competencies). The interviews with CSR professionals provided additional competencies that are important in more advanced stages of CSR implementation. In these stages companies have expressed a commitment to CSR and the focus is on developing and implementing their CSR program. At this stage more business-oriented competencies are required of CSR professionals as these two excerpts from the interviews seem to suggest:

> "These content-related competencies and social competencies are important when you need to convince decision makers to invest in sustainability. And yes, on the one hand it is important to be patient. But

you know, we do not need to be patient anymore. I mean nowadays it is clear what change we need. We are in crisis everywhere. If you look at when the group in Rome first talked about sustainability or the United Nations in Brazil about climate change and all that…it has been over 20 years already! (…) No we do not need to convince and be patient anymore. What we need is action and you have to be able to bring about this action. (Interviewee E1, Director Sustainability)"

"Before I was really pioneering. I needed to convince people of the need for sustainability. I really needed to be patient and know a lot about sustainability and about which aspects are important for the company, because I constantly needed to inform others and increase their awareness about sustainability. (…) Nowadays everybody understand that there is a limit to what we are doing, that we have limited resources, that we have climate change issues. So convincing others is not a big part of my job anymore. Other competencies are important now, such as entrepreneurial competencies and being driven to constantly push my company's CSR performance to higher levels that go beyond compliance to regulations and risk management to really try to tackle sustainability issues. (…) In a sense it is a bit of entrepreneurship. The financial component, which should be included in your list, is gaining more importance in this job. I think we are slowly but surely coming to a point that you should be able to understand business models and know how your company can make money with CSR." (Interviewee I, Manager CSR)"

We present here one of the first scientific studies to provide a broad, empirical outlook on individual competencies for CSR implementation. This outlook resulted from synthesizing insights from both educational literature and managerial literature with insights gained from interviewing CSR directors and CSR managers. Nevertheless, our results should be interpreted with a degree of caution. First, because the present study was explorative in nature we did not distinguish in company's maturity in CSR when identifying relevant individual CSR-related competencies. As our results seem to suggest, it is quite possible that CSR professionals need different competencies for different stages in CSR implementation. Future studies could yield more insights into which competencies are of particular concern in the different stages of getting CSR implemented in the company.

A second caveat of this study is that all of the mentioned CSR-relevant competencies were included in the findings, regardless of the number of articles or CSR professionals that provided support for them. Therefore, no conclusive

statements can be made with respect to which competencies are particularly important in driving change toward CSR implementation. Future research should be designed to determine which competence or competencies are unique and decisive in achieving effective CSR implementation and practice.

Our results provide several directions for practical implications, in particular for those companies that are committed to CSR. First, world's leading CEOs have expressed the need to improve their managers' and leaders' competencies and mindsets to address CSR-related challenges (Accenture 2010). Our results provide these leaders with key insights into the competencies which these managers should develop. The results seem to propose that different competencies are needed for different stages of CSR implementation, which suggests that CEOs should be careful in selecting the right professionals to manage the change toward CSR. It might very well be the case that companies should select their CSR professionals based on the fit of professionals' competencies and the company's current maturity in CSR and ambitions with respect to CSR, though further research is needed for more conclusive statements. Second, our findings provide those professionals, who are already working on CSR implementation, with criteria to reflect upon their own competencies. It shows that CSR implementation involves more than the attainment of knowledge about CSR. Our findings provide them with key competencies they should have or should develop in order to promote higher levels of CSR implementation in their company. Our proposed CSR-related competencies can serve as a template for designing CSR-related training and learning activities. It is expected that comprehensive attention for the development of the proposed competencies in key persons in companies will facilitate effective CSR implementation.

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