Exploring the limits of Western Corporate Social Responsibility Theories in Africa

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Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is about the relationship of organisations with society as a whole, and the need for organisations to align their values with societal expectations. Generally, CSR practice in Africa is thought to be adopted from Western business theories although there is evidence to suggest that Western CSR theories are not totally applicable in Africa. This is due to differences in drivers or causes of CSR in the West and in Africa, as well as cultural and managerial traits in Africa. This paper explores the limits of Western CSR Theories in Africa and argues that improved ethical responsibilities, incorporating good governance should be assigned the highest CSR priority in developing countries. It further adds that increased legislation, change in CSR priorities and the application of indigenous CSR theories such as Ubuntu, African Renaissance and Omuluwabi are means of countering the limits of Western CSR theories in Africa.

Keywords: CSR, Western CSR Theory, Africa, Ubuntu, African Renaissance, Omuluwabi

1.0 Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) also called corporate conscience, corporate citizenship and sustainable responsible business is generally understood as a way through which a company achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives. In practice, it is a set of standards by which organizations can impact their environment with the potential of creating sustainable development (Helg, 2007). There is evidence to suggest that early exposure to western culture via colonialism has greatly influenced the application of western common law concepts, such as the concept of separate legal personality and CSR, to African business practice.
The question worth examining is whether CSR practices developed for the West (as defined by Europe and America) are suited for CSR implementation in all parts of the world. In particular, to what extent are they applicable to Africa?

The authors realize that transposing business theories from one culture to another may not always result in perfect implementation or perfect fit of the business theory within that society. Today, we know that western institutional and management models exported to other regions of the world are not always very successful (Wohlgemuth, Carlsson & Kifle ed, 1998). CSR, as a business model and practice, has become quite common in Africa. Many aspects of the concept can be said to be "imported" from the West. It is therefore important to recognize the limits of western CSR theory in the African context as well as to identify the most culturally relevant methods of practicing CSR in Africa. This paper explores the limits of Western CSR theory by: distinguishing between developed and developing countries, identifying the characteristics and nature of CSR in Western countries (i.e. Western CSR theory and practice). Furthermore, it also examines the nature of CSR in Africa and compares these characteristics with the Western models.

1.1 Understanding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CSR is a controversial issue for business managers and their stakeholders. Due to the large range of contrasting definitions, and often varying use of the terminology (O'Riordan and Fairbrass, 2008), it has no universal definition. The concept is constantly being reexamined and redefined to serve changing needs and times.

While certain fundamentals of CSR remain the same, CSR issues vary in nature and importance from industry to industry and from location to location and different emphases are made in different parts of the world (Atuguba and Dowuona-Hammond, 2006). However, in a general sense, CSR is about the relationship of corporations with society as a whole, and the need for corporations to align their values with societal expectations (Atuguba and Dowuona-Hammond, 2006). CSR can be defined by its focus on "the environmental and social impact of an organisation's conduct" and as "taking responsibility for its organizational actions" (Commonwealth of Australia 2006:15). CSR can also be understood as "open and transparent business practices that are based on ethical values and respect for the community, employees and environment"(The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants 2006:2). Each of these definitions recognises a social obligation which extends beyond creating value or profit for investors, an obligation and at times an accountability to non-investor stakeholders, such as the community (Fitch and Surma, 2006). In a sense more specific to the context of developing countries, CSR can be understood to represent "the formal and informal ways in which business makes a contribution to improving the governance, social, ethical, labour and environmental conditions of the developing countries in which they operate, while remaining sensitive to prevailing religious, historical and cultural contexts" (Visser et al., 2007). CSR is a localized and socially embedded concept and as such the prevailing ideas, perceptions, issues addressed and modes of practicing CSR are reflections of organisations' responses to their socio-economic environment (Amaeshi et al, 2006).

1.2 Developing countries and Developed countries

There is an extensive debate in development literature about the classification of countries as developed and less developed or developing. Without reviving that debate, the authors believe that it is sufficient to use the term developing countries to collectively describe nations that are relatively less industrialized and have relatively lower per capita incomes. This is based on the World Bank's classification of lower and middle income countries and is also consistent with the United Nations Developments Program's (UNDP, 2006) categorization (in its summary statistics on human development) of high, medium and low development countries. It should be noted, however, that the UNDP's classification of high, medium and low development countries produces a slightly different picture than the World Bank's list of which countries are developed and developing. Most countries on the African continent are based on both categorizations. It follows therefore that by developed countries, we mean countries which are relatively more industrialized and have relatively higher per capital incomes. This includes the United States of America and most parts of Europe. These are the countries that are being referred to whenever the terms 'the West' or 'Western' are used. These countries are the source of the Western CSR theories whose applicability and limits this paper explores in the context of Africa.

2.0 The Western Theories

One of the most used and quoted models of CSR is Carroll's (1991) Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility. Carroll considers CSR to be framed in such a way that the entire range of business responsibilities are embraced and that CSR consists of four social responsibilities; economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic, with decreasing importance in that order. Carroll's pyramid illustrates these four kinds of social responsibilities as shown in Figure 1. For the past two decades Carroll's Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility has been used widely by both business managers and academicians to better define and explore CSR. The Pyramid has been useful to managers in particular to see the different obligations that the society within which they operate expect from businesses. Carroll has integrated the concepts of stakeholders and corporate citizenship into the pyramid.

The economic component which is at the base of the pyramid gives top priority to economic performance serving as the foundation of the other components of the pyramid. The thinking and position here is that a business has to be profitable, plan for the future and provide shareholders with sufficient and attractive returns. The legal component which is the second on the hierarchy expects businesses to comply with the laws and regulations of the society whilst pursuing profit within the framework of the law. The third hierarchy in Caroll's pyramid is the ethical responsibilities which are about how society expects businesses to embrace values and norms even if the values and norms might constitute a higher standard of performance than required by law. Furthermore, it involves avoiding questionable practices. However, ethical responsibilities are more difficult to deal with as they tend to be ill-defined or continually under public debate. At the top of the pyramid is philanthropic responsibility. The philanthropic responsibilities are those actions that society expects from a business to be a good corporate citizen (Helg, 2007).

It involves giving back to the community and being a good corporate citizen through donations and active participation in charities or other community welfare programs Carroll and Buchholtz, (2006). Carroll's background as an European gives credence to the basics of the concept in Europe. Thus amongst the Europeans the concept is less focused on how companies give money away to how companies make money. Like Caroll, Matten & Moon (2004) present a conceptual framework for understanding CSR, called the `implicit' versus the `explicit' CSR concept. `Explicit' CSR consists of corporate policies with the objective of being responsible for what interests the society within which the organization finds itself. These are generally less formalized and can, for example, consist of voluntary, self-interest driven CSR policies and strategies. `Implicit' CSR refers to a country's formal and informal institutions that give organisations an agreed share of responsibility for society's interests and concerns. `Implicit' CSR concerns those values, norms and rules which result in requirements for corporations to address areas that stakeholders consider important. Business associations or individual organisations are often directly involved in the definition and legitimisation of these social responsibility requirements.

In addition the triple bottom line theory proposes that the sole objective of a company is not profitability, but that companies also have objectives of adding environmental and social value to society (Crane & Matten, 2004).
The concept of sustainability is generally regarded as having emerged from the environmental-value perspective, resulting in a double sided environmental approach to sustainability: Environmental sustainability and Economic sustainability. Sustainability in the environmental perspective is about how to manage physical resources so that they are conserved for the future. Economic sustainability is about the economic performance of the organisation itself. A broader concept of economic sustainability includes the company's impact on the economic framework in which it is embedded. The social perspective has not developed as fast as the environmental and economic perspectives. The key issue in the social perspective on sustainability is that of social justice. The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) is a membership-based, non profit organisation, created in 1988 by fourteen leading European businesses define CSR as "a whole range of fundamentals that organizations are expected to acknowledge and to reflect in their actions. It includes among other things respecting human rights, fair treatment of the workforce, customers and suppliers, being good corporate citizens of the communities in which they operate and conservation of the natural environment.

These fundamentals are seen as not only morally and ethically desirable ends in themselves and as part of the organisation's philosophy, but also as key drivers in ensuring that society will allow the organisation to survive in the long term, as society benefits from the organisation's activities and behaviour" (The EFQM Framework for Social Responsibility, 2004). Like the triple bottom line theory, the EFQM considers the integration of economic, environmental and social factors as the cardinal points of the CSR concept.

Figure 2 illustrates the key dimensions of CSR according to EFQM: social, environmental and economic and how they link and also overlap. These three dimensions are consistent with the three dimensions of the Triple Bottom Line: people, planet and profit.
EFQM presents some common characteristics for CSR which are:

- Meeting the need of current stakeholders without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own demand.
- Adopting CSR voluntarily, rather than as legal requirement, because it is seen to be in the long-term interests of the organization.
- Integrating social, environmental and economic policies in day-to-day business.
- Accepting CSR as a core activity that is embedded into an organisation's management strategy.

Examples of areas particular to each dimension are:

- Economic responsibility: integrity, corporate governance, economic development of the community, transparency, prevention of bribery and corruption, payments to national and local authorities, use of local suppliers, hiring local labour and so on.
- Social Responsibility: human rights, labour rights, training and developing local labour, contributing expertise to community programs and so on.
- Environmental responsibility: precautionary approaches to prevent or minimise adverse impacts, support for initiatives promoting greater environmental responsibility, developing and diffusing environmentally friendly technologies and so on.

2.1 Nature of CSR in the West

In Europe, the economic contributions of companies take a more development-oriented approach to CSR that focuses on creating the enabling environment for responsible business. Crane and Matten (2007) also suggest that philanthropic responsibility in Europe tends more often to be more compulsory via the legal framework than discretionary acts of successful companies or rich capitalists as in the United States. They further suggest that ethical responsibilities enjoy a much higher priority in Europe than in the United States.

According to Liomi (2003), the key influencing drivers of CSR in the West can be divided between internal and external drivers. Liomi identified a number of external drivers or causes of CSR as globalisation, environmental problems facing the earth, the international initiatives taken by the business community to address sustainability, political actions in governments which influence sustainability and management guidelines, and pressures from the investment community as well as from NGOs (non governmental organisations) and the media. The internal drivers identified in the study were risk management and brand value, revenues and costs, pressure from employees and customers, and finally competitive advantage. Whereas employees have direct control over the internal drivers and can be proactive in that regard, the same cannot be said of the external drivers. Hence, they tend to be reactive in that regard.

According to Löhman & Steinholtz (2004) the customer is the main CSR driver for Western companies. The requirements from customers are strong and the increased competition has driven companies towards the creation of new values. To be able to effectively compete, companies now seek to understand their roles in society and more and more consumers require that companies have responsible products and principles that are of value for the consumer.

An American study, "the Cone Corporate Citizenship Study 2002" (www.coneinc.com) assessed 25-05-2011 showed an immense increase in Americans' expectations of companies' social role than in previous studies. More Americans than ever said they were making investments, purchasing and employment decisions to reward companies that support community needs. This trend seems to have been spurred by scandals in the business community such as the Enron collapse and the WorldCom financial situation. According to the above study, 89 percent of Americans said it is more important than ever for companies to be socially responsible.

Taking part in international initiatives, such as joining the membership organisation, European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) presents a number of direct benefits for organisations in the West: these include, among other benefits, increased brand value, greater access to finance, stronger risk management and corporate governance, customer loyalty, enhanced confidence and trust of stakeholders and an enhanced public image.
Visser (2007) explored in 2003 how corporate responsibility in the West now has emerged in response to one or a combination of five forces. These include: reporting requirements or government regulations which introduce a compulsory approach on top of which good companies will tend to innovate; the working of markets where customers, employees, or capital markets exert some form of preference or pressure; the "reputation pull" where companies are motivated to behave well to promote and safeguard their reputation, or ability to attract investment; global ethics, in the form of values of business founders or leaders, codes of practice, or individual judgments and the impact of shock and crisis such as scandals. A variety of stakeholders frame the CSR agenda in the West such as NGOs, consultants, researchers, governments and consumers.

3.0 The Nature of CSR in Africa

CSR in developing countries is different from its typical manifestation in the developed world. In Visser's study of CSR in African countries, he noted the following characteristics:

- CSR tends to be less formalised or institutionalized in terms of the CSR benchmarks commonly used in developed countries, i.e. there are rarely CSR codes, standards, management systems and reports.
- Where formal CSR is practiced, this is usually by large, high profile national and multinational companies, especially those with recognized international brands or those aspiring to global status.
- Formal CSR codes, standards, and guidelines that are most applicable to developing countries tend to be issue specific (e.g. fair trade, supply chain, HIV/AIDS) or sector-led (e.g. agriculture, textiles, mining).
- In developing countries, CSR is most commonly associated with philanthropy or charity, i.e. through corporate social investment in education, health, sports, development, the environment, and other community services.

- Making an economic contribution is often seen as the most important and effective way for business to make a social impact, i.e. through investment, job creation, taxes, and technology transfer.
- Business often finds itself engaged in the provision of social services that would be seen as government's responsibility in developed countries, for example, investment in infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and housing.
- The issues being prioritized under the CSR banner in Africa are different from most developed countries. For example, tackling HIV/AIDS, improving working conditions, provision of basic services, supply chain integrity, and poverty alleviation.
- Schmidheiny (2006), noted that social issues are generally given more political, economic, and media emphasis in developing countries than environmental, ethical, or stakeholder issues.
- The spirit and practice of CSR is often strongly resonant with traditional communitarian values and religious concepts in developing countries, for example, African humanism (Ubuntu) in South Africa.

Baskin (2006) notes that corporate responsibility in emerging markets, while more extensive than commonly believed, is less embedded in corporate strategies, less pervasive and less politically rooted than in most high-income countries. (Visser et al, 2007). In relation to Ghana specifically, Ofori (2007) recognised that Ghanaian managers believe that operating in a community involves supporting the community through social programmes, beyond corporate philanthropy, to strategic actions that respond to the different needs of the communities in which businesses operate. Ghanaian managers seem to have positive attitudes toward CSR and these attitudes are largely influenced by both individual and societal ethical values. However, managers and executives in Ghana engage in CSR activities primarily to enhance their corporate image among customers and second, for the well-being of the society. No comprehensive policy framework to set the parameters of CSR activities in Ghana exists. Furthermore, there is no institutional body regulating corporate activities on CSR and as such reporting on CSR is not consistently done among corporate bodies (Ofori, 2005).

The difference in CSR between countries in Africa and those in the west can be examined by looking at the various drivers for or causes of CSR in developing countries, like those in Africa. Although these drivers are not all unique to developing countries, together they build up a distinctive picture of how CSR is conceived, incentivized, and practiced. Seven major drivers are discussed below.

1. **Cultural Tradition -** While many believe CSR is a Western invention (and this may be largely true in its modern form and practice), there is evidence to suggest that CSR in developing countries draws strongly on indigenous cultural traditions of philanthropy, business ethics, and community 'embeddedness'. In an African context, Amaeshi et al (2006) propose that CSR in Nigeria is framed by socio-cultural influences like communalism, ethnic religious beliefs, and charitable traditions. This is not different from what pertains in Ghana. In Ghana, the socialist orientation of her first President Dr. Kwame Nkrumah gave the impression perhaps rightly or wrongly that State Owned Enterprises (SOE's) were able to solve societal problems. This in a way limited corporate organisations' societal obligations to the payment of taxes adhering to other legislations of the law. However, in recent times with the shift of orientation of governments (capitalist inclined), there has been a clarion call on organisations to undertake social programs as government alone cannot handle societal problems. This has affected the implementation of the concept in the country with most organisations engaged in the building of infrastructure. Visser (2005) suggests that the traditional philosophy of African humanism (ubuntu) is what underpins most of the approaches to CSR in Africa.

2. **Political Reform -** CSR in developing countries cannot be divorced from the socio-political reform process, which often drives business behaviour towards integrating social and ethical issues. In South Africa, the political changes towards democracy and redressing the injustices of apartheid have been a significant driver for CSR, through the practice of improved corporate governance Roussou et al (2002), collective business action for social upliftment (Fourie and Eloff, 2005), black economic empowerment and business ethics (Malan, 2005). Visser (2005) lists more than a dozen examples of socio-economic, environmental, and labour-related legislative reforms in South Africa between 1994 and 2004 that have a direct bearing on CSR.

3. **Socio-economic Priorities -** There is a powerful argument that CSR in developing countries is most directly shaped by the socio-economic environment in which firms operate and the development priorities this creates. Amaeshi et al, (2006), for example, argue that CSR in Nigeria is specifically aimed at addressing the socio-economic development challenges of the country, including poverty alleviation, health-care provision, infrastructure development, and education.

This, they argue, stands in stark contrast to many Western CSR priorities such as consumer protection, fair trade, green marketing, climate change, concerns, or socially responsible investments. Michael Spicer, CEO of the South Africa Foundation and former senior executive for the mining conglomerate Anglo American, argues that having CSR guided by the socio-economic priorities of the country or region is simply good business. Furthermore, he suggests that companies in developing countries have to actively shape the socio-economic and political landscape in order to create an operating environment which is conducive for business (Middleton, 2005).

4. **Governance Gaps** - CSR is often seen as a way to plug the 'governance gaps' left by weak, corrupt, or under-resourced governments that fail to adequately provide various social services (housing, roads, electricity, health care, education, etc.) A survey by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD, 2000) illustrates this perspective: when asked how CSR should be defined, Ghanaians stressed 'building local capacity' and 'filling in when government falls short'

There exist several criticisms of CSR used for this purpose, such as:

- CSR is an inadequate response to these governance gaps.
- There are serious questions about the dependencies this governance gap approach to CSR creates, especially where communities become reliant for their social services on companies whose primary accountability is to their shareholders.
- There is also the issue of perceived complicity between governments and companies, as Shell all too painfully experienced in Nigeria (Ite, 2004).

5. **Market Access -** CSR is also sometimes used as a partnership approach to creating or developing new markets. For example, the AED/Mark Partnership with Exxon Mobil was created on the basis of developing a viable market for insecticide-treated mosquito nets in Africa, while improving pregnant women's access to these nets, through the delivery of targeted subsidies (Diara et al, 2004).
6. **International Standardization** - Often, CSR is driven by standardization imposed by multinationals striving to achieve global consistency among its subsidiaries in developing countries. For example, the Asia study by Chapple and Moon (2005) found that multinational companies are more likely to adopt CSR than those operating solely in their home country, but that the profile of their CSR tends to reflect the profile of the country of operation rather than the country of origin.
7. **Stakeholder Activism** - In developing countries, four stakeholder groups emerge as the most powerful activists for CSR, namely development agencies (Jenkins, 2005), trade unions (Kaufman et al, 2004), international NGOs (Christian Aid, 2005), and business associations (WBCSD, 2000). In Ghana, there is a fifth group which is the Civil Society Organisations (CSO). These groups provide a platform of support for local NGOs, which are not always well developed or adequately resourced to provide strong advocacy for CSR. The media is also emerging as a key stakeholder for promoting CSR in developing countries (Vivarta and Canela, 2006).

3.1 Limits of Western Theories

Carroll's (1991) CSR Pyramid, comprising economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities, is almost entirely based on research in an American context. However, several empirical studies suggest that culture may have an important influence on perceived CSR priorities (Pinkston and Carroll, 1994; Edmondson and Carroll, 1999; Burton et al., 2000).

Therefore, according to Visser (2005) the order of the CSR layers in developing countries can be identified in Figure 3. Hence, in developing countries, economic responsibilities still get the most emphasis. However, philanthropy is given second highest priority, followed by legal and then ethical responsibilities. The African version of Carroll's classic pyramid takes on this manifestation for the following reasons:

1. Economic Responsibilities - many developing countries suffer from a shortage of foreign direct investment, as well as from high unemployment and widespread poverty. It is no surprise, therefore, that the economic contribution of companies in developing countries is highly prized, by governments and communities alike. This is similar to the approach to economic responsibility taken by companies in Europe, in contrast to the more narrow focus on profitability in the USA (Crane and Matten, 2007)

2. Philanthropic Responsibilities - developing countries have more in common with the American model, where philanthropic responsibility tends more often to be discretionary acts of successful companies or rich capitalists. Partly, this is a result of strong indigenous traditions of philanthropy in developing countries, as previously discussed.
3. Legal Responsibilities - In developing countries, legal responsibilities generally have a lower priority than in developed countries. This does not necessarily mean that companies flout the law, but there is far less pressure for good conduct. This is because, in many developing countries, the legal infrastructure is poorly developed, and often lacks independence, resources, and administrative efficiency.
4. Ethical Responsibilities - In developing countries, however, ethics seems to have the least influence on the CSR agenda. Although progress is ongoing, in general, it is not very consistent. For instance, in Transparency International's annual Corruption Perception Index and Global Corruption Barometer, developing countries usually make up the bulk of the most poorly ranked countries. Furthermore, survey respondents from these countries generally agree that corruption still affects business to a large extent. The World Bank's (2005) Investment Climate Survey paints a similar picture.

3.3 African theories as alternatives

African Renaissance

The African Renaissance is a concept popularized by a South African, Thabo Mbeki, in which the African people and nations are called upon to solve the many problems troubling the African continent. The concept reached its height in the late 1990s and the phrase was first used in 1994 in South Africa following the first democratic election after the end of apartheid. Jackson (2004) describes in his book "Management and Change in Africa, a cross-cultural perspective', the concept as an emerging, ideal type which provides a view of what Africa can offer global management generally.

The key values can be summarized as follows:
Sharing: The value of people helping each other has resulted from poverty and people's need for security. The value is a result of a network of social obligations based primarily on kinship.

Deference to Rank: The value of deference to rank is not only related to existing power distance within organisations. Traditional rulers had to earn respect and ruled by consensus, even though they had inherited their titles. For a person to take his/her proper place in the social scale is regarded as an important aspect of the virtue of humanity.

Sanctity of commitment: Commitment and mutual obligations derives from group pressures to meet what one has promised and to confirm to social expectations.

Regard for compromise and consensus: This value can be viewed as the maintenance of harmony within the social context but also qualifies as deference to rank. The chief of the tribe had to live the values of his community in an exemplary way. Since the people were strongly represented with a duty to attend court hearings and all had a responsibility to each other. As a result of this collective responsibility everyone had a right to question in open court. The concept of openness is an important value.

Good Social and Personal Relations: High levels of humanism, collective responsibility, community self-help and mutual assistance are values within many African societies. Jackson (2004) labels the leadership orientation of African renaissance management systems as consensus. This is not only because leadership in traditional African societies was mainly consensus seeking but also because there are values in African leadership embracing harmony in all part of life as well as with the community and stakeholders.

Ubuntu

A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.
Archbishop Desmond Tutu proposes Ubuntu as a South African ethic or ideology focusing on people's relations with each other (Mbigi & Maree, 1995). The word comes from the Zulu and Xhola languages. A rough translation in English would be "humanity towards others" and "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity." The cardinal belief of Ubuntu is that a man can only be a man through others. In its most fundamental sense it stands for personhood and morality.

The key values of Ubuntu are as follows:

- Group solidarity
- Conformity
- Compassion
- Respect
- Human dignity
- Collective unity

According to Mbigi and Maree (1995) the challenges for African organisations are primarily about the challenges of social and political innovation rather than about the technical challenges. The authors propose that the innovation of the African people ought to be integrated with successful management techniques from the West and the East. This requires internal, creative thinking since this approach cannot be imported but has to be done by local people. The authors also propose that religion, since so embedded in African society, is considered when developing management models. In the Shona (largest indigenous group in Zimbabwe) tribal culture, in order to contextualize any concept or practice successfully one must be prepared to trace its roots, what is called Nhorowondo. The authors suggest that if Africans are going to adapt processes they must be prepared to trace their history. They must find out who the people were who developed that particular practice and what their agenda was and then proceed to unpack only the elements of that particular practice that are appropriate and able to address their own problems. According to Ubuntu, change efforts have to create harmony between the individual and the community as well as nature, particularly ancestral spirits.

Omoluwabi

Omoluwabi is an exploration of character as an organising principle (www.omoluwabi.com) accessed 23-05-2011. The background is that the 21st century is a time of great abundance and choice offered across the world that narrows distance with incredible speed. People live in a world with access to the body of wisdom as well as information across all cultures available to all who have technology. The question is how adaptive people are in this unpredictable and explosive pace of change. The primary basis of the Omoluwabi model is that the only true asset in this time is character. For many centuries, the people now identified as the Yoruba of the West coast of Africa have used the concept of Omoluwabi to signify an evolved character. In fact, it was extremely important amongst the Oyo, whose empire was the basis or model for the current definition of Yoruba. This concept was a prevalent socio- economic tool and of important religious significance. Omoluwabi is a description of an evolving model, which has seven elements, but as being developed, it could and should have other dimensions as well as applications. The elements are linked to ancient Yoruba concepts and values.

4.0 Implications and Conclusion

In the running of business in Africa, Western Corporate Social Responsibility theories such as Carroll's (1991) CSR Pyramid, (comprising economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities), the EFQM definition, the triple bottom line concept and the implicit versus explicit schools of thought are applied in carrying out social responsibility. Evidence suggests that these western theories are not perfectly applicable for several reasons, all of which stem from the key difference that western countries (originators of these theories) are relatively more socially and economically developed. Western countries have different drivers of CSR with emphasis on issues such as consumer competitiveness, 'reputation pull', brand management strategies and environmental concerns. In African countries such as Ghana, however, drivers of CSR include filling in where government falls short, creating an enabling economic environment for the business as well as philanthropic and charitable concerns. Issues of ethics and brand image are not relevant.

Whereas Corporate Social responsibility in the West is characterized by ethical concerns and CSR activities closely governed by legislation, both formal and informal, playing a very large role in business and many stakeholders (such as employees, consumers and community leaders) playing active roles in guiding the direction of the concept. In Africa, CSR activities consist mostly of those activities that add to infrastructure or the economic development of the community through job creation, taxation and so on. Topical issues for CSR in Africa include health (HIV/Aids and Malaria), sanitation, sports and education. Western CSR theory application in Africa is not only limited by Africa's CSR drivers but also by its cultural and managerial traits. Traditional African approaches to community, leadership and business are at times at variance with the very principles upon which western theories are built. Africans are community- conscious, have a high respect for power distance relationships and believe in harmonious win-win relationships.

African managers are very concerned about social network and relationships. People are valued as ends in themselves and not a means to an end. Although this often results in inefficiencies and poor creative results, it ensures that even when not legally required to do so, African managers have an inherent understanding of CSR and giving back to society. In recent times, there has arisen alternative ways of looking at corporate responsibility in the African context. One way is to adapt existing western theories to make them more applicable to African societies. Visser (2005) recommendation of an ideal Africanized Carroll's pyramid is a clear example of this. The descriptive approach adopted previously concerning the African Carroll's pyramid was used to illustrate how CSR actually manifests in developing countries, rather than presenting an ideal view of what CSR in Africa should look like. For example, it is not proposed that legal and ethical responsibilities should get such a low priority, but rather that they do in practice. By contrast, if we are to work towards an ideal CSR Pyramid for CSR in developing countries, we would argue that improved ethical responsibilities, incorporating good governance should be assigned the highest CSR priority. Governance reform holds the key to improvements in all the other dimensions, including economic development, rule of law, and voluntary action. Hence, embracing more transparent, ethical governance practices should form the foundation of CSR practice in developing countries, which in turn will provide the enabling environment for more widespread responsible business.

Another way of handling corporate social responsibility in Africa is to develop totally new theories with their basis in African culture. Ubuntu and African renaissance are attempts of conceptualizing African values so that they can be applied to African businesses. These theories stress the values of sharing, community, harmony with the past and the present. Omoluwabi, a Yoruba construct, emphasizes the need for Africans to be careful yet innovative in the application of ideas claimed from other cultures. Practicing CSR in accordance with these principles prevent discrepancies, ensure accountability and trust between African businesses and the societies they find themselves in. By adapting and developing CSR theories that are more compatible with African culture and developing appropriate legislation to streamline how companies carry out CSR, the limits imposed on the African business by western theories of CSR would be overcome. A further research on the drivers of CSR in Africa, to serve as a basis for developing CSR theories more compatible with African culture and values is therefore recommended.

Figure 1: Carroll's Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility

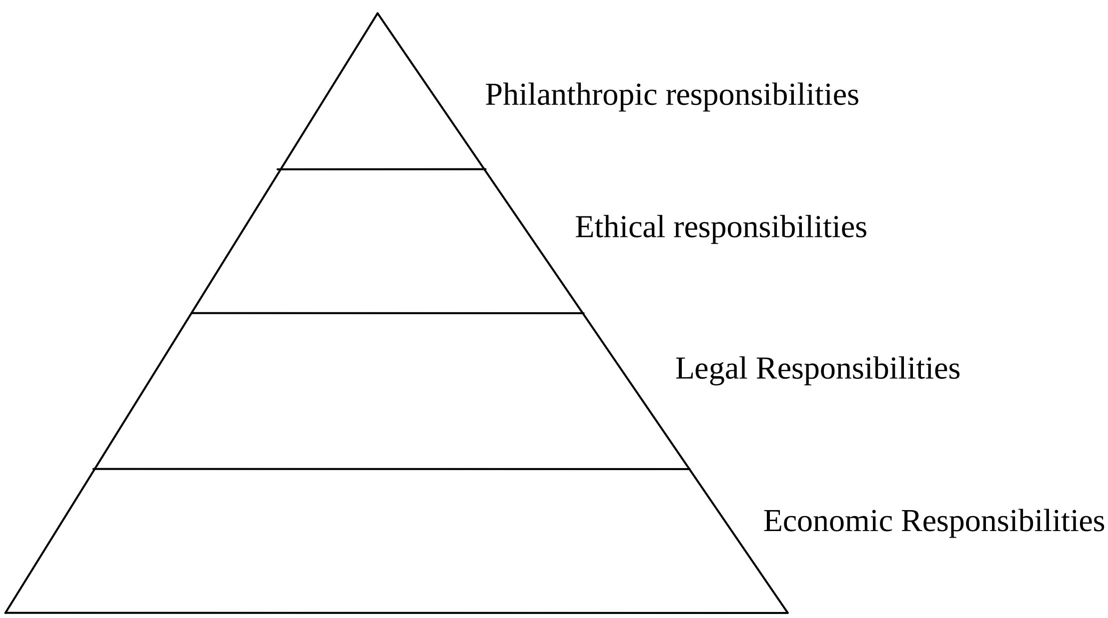


Figure 2: Key dimensions of CSR according to EFQM

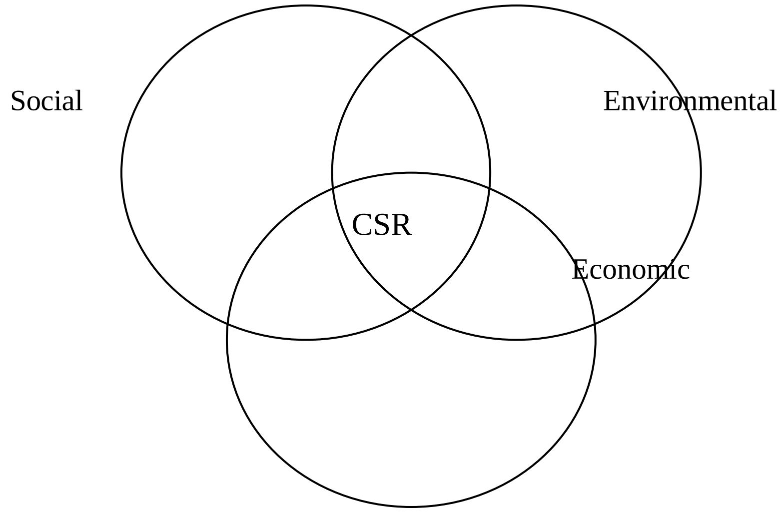
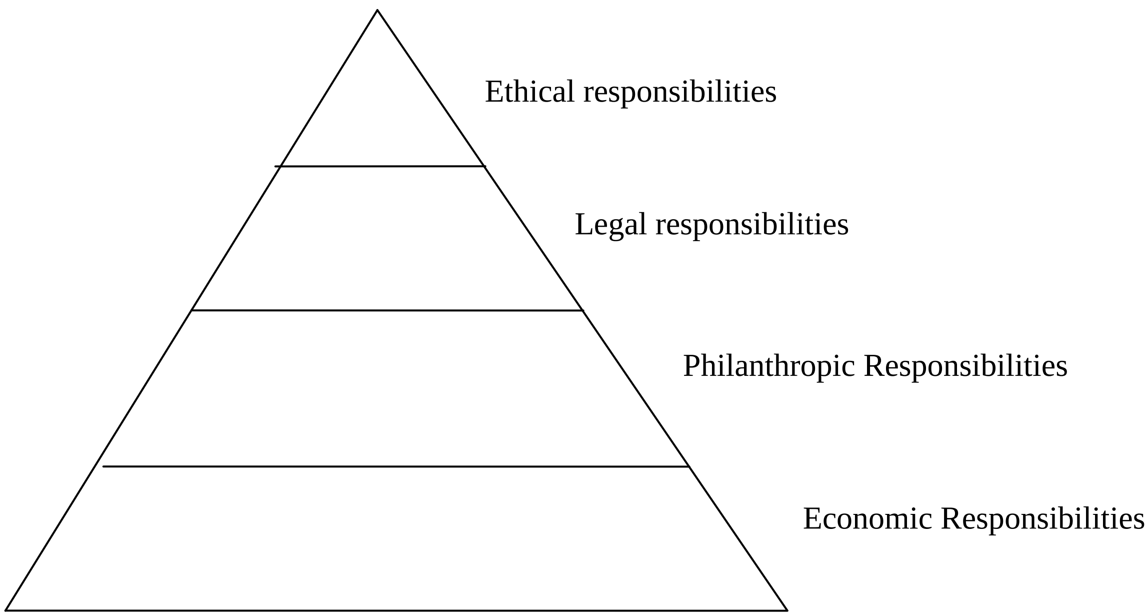


Figure 3: Order of CSR layers in developing countries



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