# Corporate Social Responsibility Education in Europe

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ABSTRACT. In the context of some criticism about social responsibility education in business schools, the paper reports findings from a survey of CSR education (teaching and research) in Europe. It analyses the extent of CSR education, the different ways in which it is defined and the levels at which it is taught. The paper provides an account of the efforts that are being made to "mainstream" CSR teaching and of the teaching methods deployed. It considers drivers of CSR courses, particularly the historical role of motivated individuals and the anticipation of future success being dependent on more institutional drivers. Finally it considers main developments in CSR research both by business school faculty and PhD students, tomorrow's researchers and the resources devoted to CSR research. The conclusion includes questions that arise and further research directions.

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## Introduction

This paper reports on a 2003 survey of corporate social responsibility (CSR) education – by which we mean teaching and research – in Europe.[1] The significance of this survey lies in the question as to whether business schools are no more than brainwashing institutions educating their graduates only in relatively narrow shareholder value ideology which has been raised by numerous commentators in the aftermath of recent corporate scandals in America in the business press (Caulkin, 2004; Goshal, 2003; Willen, 2004) as well as in Academia (Adler, 2002; Gioia, 2002). Others have concluded that there is an "intellectual bias against business ethics" in business schools and that teaching and research in business ethics and similarly oriented areas is systematically discouraged and seen as a "field of study [...] falling somewhere on the vector between ambivalence and disdain" (Hosmer, 1999, pp. 91, 102).

Conversely other surveys have presented a more positive picture, notably the *Beyond Grey Pinstripes* report of the Aspen Institute conducted first in 2001 and repeated in 2003 (Aspen/WRI, 2003). These findings contrast with some earlier studies (for an overview see Collins and Wartick, 1995; Enderle, 1990) by depicting a growing interest and consolidation of business ethics and responsibility related topics in business schools' teaching and research agendas.

While the majority of these studies have focused on North American schools and a good number on related subjects such as marketing and ethics

(Shannon and Berl, 1997), sustainability (Wheeler et al., 2001) or assessment criteria for ethics courses (Morris, 2001) only limited attention has been directed at the topic from a European perspective. This could in part be credited to the fact that the general field of CSR in Europe is shaped somewhat differently and took longer to take off as an academic discipline. Certainly the most comprehensive initial overview over the situation in Europe in the late 1980s has been provided by Mahoney (1990) in a comparative study of the teaching of business ethics in the U.S., U.K. and continental Europe. This work provided a first overview over the field though the study is of rather limited value for someone interested in the role of CSR in business schools in Europe as it focused rather narrowly on the topic of business ethics and was mainly interested in a comparative perspective between the three regions.

Apart from Mahoney's seminal though dated work, more recent information on the situation in European business schools has been case-study based work on business ethics practice in various continental European countries (Zsolnai, 1998) or in-depth surveys in particular countries, most notably the U.K. (Cowton and Cummins, 2003; Cummins, 1999). In 1998, the European Business Network for Social Cohesion and The Copenhagen Centre provided information of a range of business schools' activity but did not aggregate or interrogate the findings (EBNSC/Copenhagen Centre, 1998). So far then, there has been little attention to assessing the overall state and shape of the contemporary CSR field in European business schools.

This paper reports on the findings of a survey that was designed to fill these gaps. The first goal was to provide an overview of teaching and research in the broad field of CSR. We assumed that CSR would mostly be understood as an umbrella term for a broad set of synonyms and overlapping concepts reflecting both business and society relations and "business ethics". The second goal was to capture the range of meanings of and activities in CSR reflecting Europe's different business and educational contexts. Thirdly, we were interested in finding out what role in terms of visibility, acceptance with students, resource provision for research and general esteem the field possesses at European universities. The background here is precisely those suspicions

about the potentially ambivalent role of business schools in this context noted above.

While most of the above cited surveys (with the exception of the "Beyond Grey Pinstripes" – report) are rather narrowly focusing on Business Ethics as a theme we decided to cast our net somewhat wider. As the founder of the European Business Ethics Network has recently argued, "business ethics" has not necessarily been the most popular term under which business and society issues have been discussed in the different European countries throughout the last decades (van Luijk, 2001). Furthermore, as Mahoney's study has already indicated, even within the narrow remit of "business ethics" there is a great variety of terminology within various European countries and their respective philosophical traditions (1990, pp. 167–170). The choice of the particular terminology of "corporate social responsibility" was determined by the fact that key institutional players (such as the 2002 founded European Academy of Business in Society, one of the partners of this research), key media (such as the *Financial Times*) and to a growing degree, corporate oriented publications seems to have made this term an increasingly popular label (see, e.g., www.csreurope.org). Our results echo these assumptions as indeed the variety of topics in the field proved broader than the remit of "business ethics".

While CSR has been a subject of discussion in business and academia in North America for quite a long time (Carroll, 1999) the debate in Europe has only gained momentum fairly recently. There is much evidence that CSR is "an idea whose time has come in Europe" (Wolf, 2002). It is manifest in: company communications; company organisational structures; company reports and audits; new business coalitions; new consultancy firms; portfolios of traditional business consultants; government policies; and media coverage.

The new imperatives for CSR raise the challenge for corporations to acquire and develop appropriate skills and competencies. This raises the question of the role played by universities and business schools, the key provider of business education, in terms of:

- provision of graduates with CSR skills,
- supply of CSR education for practitioners,
- specialist CSR education for industries,
- research to advance knowledge in CSR.

The paper analyses these issues by addressing the following questions:

- Is CSR taught to business students, tomorrow's business leaders and managers?
- At what levels and in what sorts of courses is CSR taught?
- What meanings are attached to CSR education?
- Is CSR teaching conducted with business and community partners?
- What are the drivers for CSR teaching?
- What teaching techniques are deployed?
- On which themes does CSR research focus?
- On which CSR themes do PhD students focus?

**Methodology**

Although our aim was to include as many countries, institutions and types of CSR courses as possible, a number of methodological issues arise in the study of European CSR education.

- What is a "university"? While some countries use this term only for all institutes of higher education (e.g., Britain) other countries offer a variety of names for institutions of higher education (e.g., Germany, France, The Netherlands).
- What is a "business school"? Whilst many countries have institutions called business schools most German, French and Italian business education, for instance, takes place in "management", "economics" or "accounting" departments, "chairs" or "faculties".
- What is "CSR"? Leaving aside translation issues, there is a variety of labels used in CSR educational courses.
- What is "Europe"? While territory between the West of Ireland and the Urals is usually referred to as Europe, it could also be defined by the European Union (EU) or by certain cultural or religious traditions (Crane and Matten, 2004, pp. 26–31).

We focused our research mainly on the major Western European economies of the EU plus Switzerland, Norway and Iceland as these countries have the longest standing tradition in (capitalist) business education. Furthermore, these countries can be regarded to be characteristic of "Europe" to a stronger degree than those Eastern European countries which only recently joined the capitalist economic system and are only just about to formally join the political system of the EU. We acknowledge a growing number of higher education institutions in business and economics which follow a capitalist approach in post-communist Eastern Europe and would encourage a more systematic inclusion of these institutions in future research. At the current stage though, we considered the aggregation of business schools of both parts of Europe in one survey as too heterogeneous to provide a picture for Europe as a whole. However, we received responses from two Eastern European EU "accession" countries (Poland and Slovenia) which have been included and increased the population to twenty countries.

Given our interest in identifying how demand for CSR education is satisfied, nine questions addressed teaching:

- availability, names and enrolment in CSR modules and programmes,
- integration of CSR into the core curriculum ("mainstreaming"),
- teaching partners and tools,
- drivers of CSR teaching,
- future success factors for CSR teaching.

These were complemented by seven questions about CSR research:

- faculty members and PhD students involved and their interests,
- resource provision,
- interest of and collaboration with business.

As the concept of CSR does not originate in Europe, we expected a range of terms to describe it and as we aimed to capture a culturally sensitive picture of CSR education, we provided respondents with a range of CSR synonyms (Table I).

Our focus is *institutional* and thus contrasts with Mahoney's (1990) earlier study which investigated the *subject* of "business ethics" in a comparative perspective. Our research tool was expressly designed to elicit information about business schools and their broader attitudes, approaches and indeed their openness towards teaching and research activities in

TABLE I

Synonyms for CSR specified

| Synonyms for CSR specified |
| --- |
| Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Business Ethics, Corporate Citizenship, Sustainability, Corporate Environmental Management, Business and Society, Business and Governance, Business and Globalization, Stakeholder Management, Governance |

the chosen area. Using the website of the International Education Information Centre[2] we identified institutions with a facility for business education, whether in business schools or in university faculties or departments of management, economics, accounting, administration etc. This yielded 669 institutions whose heads of schools, deans, directors or rectors were invited to complete the survey. Interestingly this secured only a 9.7% response rate ($n = 65$).[3] In addition we addressed the survey to members of a database of 3,000 European CSR teachers and researchers[4] in the expectation that this cohort would be better motivated to respond. Between March and July 2003 both cohorts were invited by email to complete the questionnaire at a custom-built webpage, via email or on a hardcopy. As this yielded a response rate of the equivalent of only 12% of institutions we increased our coverage in two further phases of research in August and September 2003. First, the heads of one in three business schools were invited by phone to reply. Second, we conducted in-depth analysis of website and other material of those telephoned but who did not reply.[5]

Overall the survey yielded responses from 24.8% of the European business schools.

There was some variation in the response rates per national grouping (Table II). The relatively high response rates from the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic countries is no surprise as the language and business systems of the former are closest to the U.S. as the

birthplace of CSR and as the latter countries tend to teach business education in English. Moreover, inclusion in survey findings is likely to be regarded as a marketing tool for teaching programmes and evidence of esteem for research in Anglo-Saxon countries.[7]

*Definitions of CSR teaching units*

Three questions investigated the nature of CSR courses in terms both of individual modules (semester length courses) and full dedicated programmes (multiple modules leading to a degree or other award). The variety in the conceptualisation of CSR education is illustrated by the fact that forty different programme labels were reported. Table III presents 27 generic titles. Whereas only 16% of institutions used the term CSR, a quarter used *Sustainable Development* and another 16% described their *Environmental* or *Ecological Management* programmes as CSR. This indicates that CSR in European business education is partly grounded in the environmental agenda. The second most common CSR programme label is *Business Ethics* (22%) and given that ''ethics'' is included in another 18% of programme labels, it is clear that the ethical dimension provides another prevalent theme.

The combination of the *Accounting, Corporate Governance, Law* and *Public Governance* and NGO and

TABLE II

Response rates by national groupings[6]

|  | Total Europe | Nordic | Anglo-Saxon | France | Benelux | Central Europe | Southern Europe |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Response rate (%) | 24.8 | 39.4 | 46.9 | 22.0 | 7.6 | 21.4 | 9.6 |
| Replies (N) | 166 | 21 | 61 | 18 | 6 | 43 | 17 |
| Respondents (%) | 100 | 12.6 | 36.8 | 10.8 | 3.6 | 25.9 | 10.2 |

TABLE III
Generic labels of CSR programmes

| Generic labels of CSR programmes[*] |
| --- |
| Sustainable Development 24%; Business Ethics 22% |
| Ecological / Environmental Management 16%; Business and Society 16%; Corporate Social Responsibility 16% Globalization, Transnational Management Geopolitics 8%; Management/Business 8%; Accounting 5%; Corporate Citizenship 5%; Human Resource Management 5%; Business Transformation 5% |
| Corporate Governance; Cross Sector Partnership; Culture; Finance; Law; Leadership; Managing Corporate Community Investment; Marketing; NGO and government partnerships; Philosophy; Public Governance; Sociology; Stakeholder Management; Strategy; Supply Chain Management; Tourism and Social Responsibility (all 3%) |

[*]Respondents could give as many titles as there were different programmes

TABLE IV
Generic labels of CSR modules

| Generic labels of CSR modules[*] |
| --- |
| Business ethics 35% |
| Corporate Social Responsibility 11%; Ecological/Environmental Management 9%; Accounting 7%; Globalization, Transnational, Geopolitics 7% |
| Sustainable Development 5%; Business and Society 4%; Corporate Governance 4%; Leadership 4% |
| Management/Business; Human Resource Management; Corporate Citizenship; Culture; Finance; Diversity Management; Philosophy; Strategy (all 2%) |
| The Economics of Corruption; Sociology; Marketing (all 1%); |

[*]Respondents could give as many titles as there were different optional or required CSR modules

Government Partnerships labels illustrates another characteristic of European CSR education: its embeddedness in the wider corporate and social governance themes. In addition, some of the labels reflect more recent trends in management education such as *Business Transformation*, *Culture*, *Leadership*, *Supply Chain Management*, *Stakeholder Management* or *Tourism*.

There is also great variety in the labels used for CSR module titles (Table IV). CSR itself is used only in 11% of institutions though is the second most common single title. *Environmental Management* is ranked third but is less prominent that among the CSR programmes (Table III) even when *Sustainable Development* (14%) is included.

The main difference between Tables III and IV is the relative status of *Business Ethics* (35%) as a label for modules. This is probably explained by the fact that CSR programmes are designed and marketed to be differentiated from similar programmes in other institutions whereas modules need only be differentiated from those within the same institution. Moreover programme labels are more likely to reflect their straddling of a range of subject matter represented by their constituent modules. The fact that so many module labels are only used in a small number of institutions may reflect the comparative ease with which they are validated and their orientation to individual teachers' special expertise.

The relative scarcity of modules and programmes labelled *CSR* itself or such close synonyms as *business and society*, *corporate citizenship*, *diversity* or *corporate values* suggests that – unlike business ethics – this is a recent development in European business education. Nonetheless, it appears as a dynamic platform for teaching a number of current societal issues or management fashions. It is also striking that there is a proliferation of CSR labels generally considered of fringe status from a business school perspective (e.g., with reference to the disciplines of sociology,

TABLE V

CSR modules and CSR programmes in European business schools

|  | MBA | MA/MSc | Under-graduate (bachelor etc.) | Executive/short courses |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Proportion of schools with dedicated CSR programmes | 12% | 11% | 9% | 13% |
| Average enrolments per year | 74 | 200 | 240 | 87 |
| Proportion of schools with optional CSR modules | 32% | 35% | 51% | 17% |
| Average enrolments per year | 45 | 34 | 78 | 77 |
| Average enrolments in the entire degree scheme per year | 76 | 154 | 396 | 146 |

philosophy, politics, history; and to topics such as culture, critical decision making, equality, risk and society).

*Level and types of CSR programmes*

About two thirds (117 out of 166) of respondents indicated that they offered CSR courses (either as single modules or programmes). If the respondents are representative of all European business schools, this might be considered as a relatively impressive level of provision. We assume, however, that CSR course providers are over-represented in the sample as about half of the respondents were taken from the CSR researchers and teachers database and in any case there is a greater likelihood for the active to report than the inactive as it was clear that the information about course providers would be made publicly available.[8]

Table V indicates that dedicated CSR programmes are most likely to be offered on Executive and Short Courses (13%) and that these have healthy enrolments, suggesting that industry itself is something of a driver here. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that dedicated CSR MBA programmes are second (12%) also with healthy average enrolment numbers. Given that executive and short courses normally address quite narrow educational objectives it is also impressive that one in six include a CSR optional module. Certainly the figure of a third of MBA programmes offering a CSR optional module indicates there is a reason-

able, if not uniform, supply of CSR education and the fact that their enrolments are about two thirds of the average suggests that there is a reasonable, if not overwhelming demand from this cohort of students.

This picture of industry being a CSR education driver is reinforced when comparisons are made with the more academic programmes. Although similar proportions of schools offer CSR MA/MSc optional modules, the relative student enrolment rates are much lower. With regard to the MA/MSc data, however, two qualifications seem to be appropriate. First, there is serious variation as to what an ''MA'' means: in some institutions (e.g., in Germany, France, Scotland) this is a first degree whereas in England it is a second degree. In addition, countries such as Germany, Switzerland or The Netherlands have other titles for this degree or have only recently switched to the Anglo-Saxon terminology of ''Master/Bachelor'' degrees so that we would expect some confusion about the exact categories in this part of our responses. Furthermore, only few institutions with a dedicated provision of this particular degree scheme provided actual figures for enrolment which may explain the seemingly high figures, especially for MA/MSc students on dedicated programmes. Nevertheless, it is striking that the course level with the lowest proportion of CSR programmes is the Bachelor level. Whilst 50% of respondent institutions offer BA optional modules their enrolments are relatively low, compared to the respective ratios for the MBA, for instance. Given that the majority of business school undergraduates

will not take an MBA or another second degree there is an important challenge as to how CSR can most effectively be infused into day-to-day business through the education of the next generation of managers.

### Mainstreaming CSR education

One of the main criticisms of business school education is that the socially irresponsible and ethically dubious assumptions of certain core doctrines, theories and concepts dominate the curriculum and discourage awareness of CSR and ethical behaviour among managers and corporations. The allegation is that teaching Anglo-American style shareholder-value oriented governance of capitalist organizations, particularly in the core of MBA programmes, is antithetical to CSR (Hosmer, 1985; Stewart, 2004). It follows from this perspective that for CSR education to make a difference in the future of business it should be in the form neither of a hived-off programme nor an optional module but embedded in the core of business education. Many CSR teachers and practitioners share this view that CSR should be fully integrated into degree level teaching programmes. This is known as ''mainstreaming'' and would enable every business student to be made aware of the social and ethical dimensions of their future activities as a businessperson. We therefore investigated the extent and nature of CSR mainstreaming in European business education.

Notwithstanding the definition of mainstreaming presented above and recognising the fact that business schools may adopt a variety of strategies, we preferred not to define it for our respondents but rather to learn from them how they define and implement it.

TABLE VI
Extent of CSR mainstreaming

| Extent of mainstreaming | Proportion(%) |
| --- | --- |
| Not mainstreaming at all | 7 |
| Mainstreaming in one way | 41 |
| Mainstreaming in two ways or more | 39 |
| No response to question | 13 |

TABLE VII
Approaches to CSR mainstreaming

| Approaches to CSR mainstreaming | Proportion (%) |
| --- | --- |
| Optional modules | 47 |
| Embedding in other modules and courses | 38 |
| Compulsory modules | 27 |
| Other CSR teaching activities (seminars, special events, conferences, etc.) | 20 |

Most (80%) schools describe themselves as mainstreaming CSR into their teaching programmes (Table VI). The strength of this finding is underlined by the fact that this was the single most answered question of the survey (87%). Moreover, half of these indicate that they are mainstreaming CSR in more than one way.

Table VII shows that the most popular way of mainstreaming CSR is through the provision of optional modules. This is a relatively low cost approach but some critics would insist that the provision of options does not fundamentally change a business school's core orientation and influence.

This criticism is met by the quarter of respondents who have introduced compulsory modules to ensure that every graduate has at least some basic knowledge of CSR. The problem may remain that such modules are regarded cynically or as removed from the mainstream business of business. Hence it is impressive that nearly 40% of respondents indicate that they are embedding CSR in other modules and courses. This would, for instance, imply that a strategy module would not only teach a managerial view of the firm (as being responsible mainly to shareholders, customers and suppliers) but a broader sense of the firm being intertwined in more complex responsibilities towards a plethora of stakeholders and other societal actors. Respondents also reported a rich variety of other teaching activities designed to mainstream CSR education such as special seminars, speakers from the CSR industry, special events or conferences.

Overall it appears that many business schools are seeking new ways of integrating CSR into the school but that this is a relatively new multifaceted and ongoing process. Tables III and IV also evidence

TABLE VIII
Special teaching tools used in CSR
teaching

| Teaching tool | Percentage of respondents using the tool (%) |
|---|---|
| Business speakers | 32 |
| CSR case-studies | 25 |
| NGO speakers | 20 |
| CSR professional speakers | 17 |
| Internships | 6 |
| Communications/media speakers | 5 |
| Other, the five most popular: | 17 |
|   E-learning | |
|   Debates/discussion forums | |
|   Simulations | |
|   Audiovisual aids | |
|   International student exchange | |

TABLE IX
Drivers of CSR teaching in business schools

| Driver | Average rating* |
|---|---|
| Individual faculty members | 4.3 |
| Leadership of school/faculty/department | 2.9 |
| Business organisation | 1.9 |
| Students | 1.8 |
| University leadership | 1.7 |
| CSR-related networks and associations | 1.4 |
| Governmental/ministerial bodies | 1.2 |
| Other ('society' most frequently cited) | 0.3 |

*Scale: 1 (not important) to 5 (most important).

the CSR teaching curricula are heavily influenced by practice, a finding supported by the fact that 80% of respondents reported industry to be the single most important teaching partner. This influenced is balanced, however, by NGO and academic inputs.

The role of NGOs, reported by two thirds of respondents, is particularly interesting as it represents the introduction of a new community of practitioners to business schools. One might speculate that through CSR teaching business education managers might be assisted in overcoming more traditional boundaries and improving their wider engagement. Surprisingly, a rather common tool of inviting guest lecturers from other universities, though reported by half of respondents, is less widely deployed than industry and NGO speakers. This may reflect the relative under-development of CSR as an academic sub-field.

*Drivers of CSR education in business schools*

The survey invited perceptions of recent and future drivers of CSR business education. Respondents indicated that hitherto the single most important driver of the CSR agenda has been the initiatives of individual faculty members (Table IX). The key actors are not the leaders of the schools or universities but individual faculty members with a research interest or otherwise in CSR.

This finding is consistent with our interpretation of the low response rates from business school leadership which did not appear to signal high

a serious approach to mainstreaming. Apart from the variety of labels from different CSR traditions (e.g., *sustainable development*), current issues (e.g., *globalization*) or fringe topics (e.g., *risk and society*) numerous schools report integrating CSR into such mainstream modules as finance, marketing, strategy or human resource management and even *management/business in general*.

*CSR teaching methods*

One of the most common ways of encouraging enrolment in pioneering educational programmes is to award student scholarships. Interestingly these are used to encourage CSR education only in a handful of institutions. These tend to be those schools with strengths in CSR research and the funding of the scholarships is exclusively sourced from industry itself, industrial foundations or individual industrialists. This is an area where growth might be expected if the area of CSR education matures.

There is widespread use of practitioner speakers, be it from business, CSR industry or NGOs as well as case studies from industry, and these methods dwarf the more academic instruments of e-learning, audiovisual aids etc. (Table VIII). This suggests that

TABLE X
Drivers of future success CSR teaching in business schools

| Driver | Average rating* |
|---|---|
| Business approval and support | 3.4 |
| Required for programme accreditation | 3.2 |
| Inclusion in business school ranking | 3.0 |
| Employment success of graduates | 2.6 |
| Governmental incentives requirements, regulations | 2.5 |
| Increased enrolments | 2.3 |

*Scale 1 (lowest) to 5 highest).

levels of awareness of CSR education. Thus critics of business schools are not completely wrong in suggesting that business schools as institutions are not encouraging social responsibility in business education. Conversely the motivated individuals have clearly succeeded in convincing school leadership as this was ranked as the second most important factor. We should temper these interpretations by noting that these two constituencies were the main respondents to the survey and may have over-estimated their role in the development of the agenda. Notwithstanding this our finding highlights the significance of individual's initiative for the agenda of CSR education. This underlines its position in the "pioneer stage" in the context of its business school status. Quite a significant role can be assigned to business and students as the two major "customers" of business schools which reflects some of our earlier findings about the interest of business in CSR and the attractiveness of the topic for students.

Looking at the future drivers of CSR in business education the question arises as to what will take it from the "pioneering" phase to its next stage of "institutionalisation". The single most important factor identified focuses on the main "stakeholder" of business schools in the shape of "business approval and support". Given that we have identified a prominent role for business in our analysis this may make for optimism about the future of CSR teaching in European business schools (Table X).

The importance of business schools' institutional environment is highlighted by the emphasis that respondents place on the inclusion of CSR in rankings and as a requirement for programme accreditation. A key question is therefore whether in the increasingly competitive world of business education CSR is regarded as one of the most important factors by key institutional actors involved in ranking and accreditation in Europe as well as by individual business school leaders.

It is worth re-producing some of the comments given under "other future drivers" of future CSR teaching.

- "Staff willing and able to teach the topic" indicates that even with a broader institutionalisation of CSR in the business school curriculum, the mere effort of pioneers will not sustain a broader teaching programme. This has particular implications for staff and junior academics for whom CSR may offer an attractive future field of work.
- "Quality of teaching" is also mentioned, indicating that once the topic has been developed beyond that for the audience of the "converted" or "motivated minority", CSR will need to be taught in an engaging and exciting manner in order to appeal to "mainstream" business students.
- One interesting and not completely flippant observation of one respondent is the driver of "public opinion, driven by more scandals, environmental disasters, fat cattery, corporate manslaughter".
- One respondent indicated the need for increased interest by students: "It would help if students had a moral basis – even from Sunday school days".

## CSR Research in Europe

On the assumption that university education in business schools would be inextricably linked with research, five questions addressed the research of faculty members and research students. It is interesting to note that our assumption does not hold entirely true as only two thirds of the respondents indicated that staff at their school were research active in CSR and only a quarter provide PhD supervision in the field. These figures underscore our finding (above) that the general development of

TABLE XI
Research areas of European scholars in CSR

| Research topic | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Business Ethics | 36 |
| Environmental/Ecology Management | 21 |
| Corporate Social Responsibility | 20 |
| Sustainable development | 18 |
| Corporate Governance | 17 |
| Accounting and Finance, incl. social/environmental reporting accountability | 13 |
| Stakeholder Management | 12 |
| Globalisation | 11 |
| Strategy | 5 |
| Business and Society | 4 |
| Leadership | 3 |
| Corporate Citizenship | 3 |
| Marketing | 3 |
| Corporate communication | 2.4 |
| Culture | 2.4 |
| Corruption/Crime/Racism | 1.8 |
| E-commerce | 1.8 |
| Ethical Investment | 1.8 |
| Management | 1.8 |
| Corporate reputation | 1 |
| Gender | 1 |
| Sociology | 1 |
| Spirituality | 1 |
| Supply chain | 1 |
| Tourism, incl. Ecotourism Sustainable tourism | 1 |
| Trust | 1 |

TABLE XII
Key words of PhD research topics in Europe

| Research topic | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Corporate Social Responsibility | 5.5 |
| Accounting and Finance, incl. social/environmental reporting accountability | 3.6 |
| Business Ethics | 3.6 |
| Sustainable development | 3.6 |
| Environmental/Ecology Management | 3.0 |
| Globalisation | 2.4 |
| Leadership | 1.8 |
| Corporate Citizenship | 1.8 |
| Stakeholder Management | 1.2 |
| Corporate communication | 0.6 |
| Corruption/Crime/Racism | 0.6 |
| Management | 0.6 |
| Marketing | 0.6 |
| Business and Society | 0.6 |
| Strategy | 0.6 |

CSR education is not so much a function of academic research but of a range of other drivers. Certainly it gives rise to the suggestion that the broad CSR agenda in teaching is more driven by interest from industry than underpinned by academic research. Notwithstanding the aggregate data it is worth noting that some of the institutions which have pioneered CSR education do have significant numbers of researchers and PhD students confirming the strong role of research active scholars in pioneering the topic.

Consistent with our finding of the heterogeneity of the CSR teaching area, the reported research areas of European CSR scholars are anything but a homogenous field. Although 20% of respondents refer to CSR, nearly thirty different labels were reported which we group under more generic labels (Table XI). As with CSR teaching, environmental and sustainability issues are prominent, exceeded only by *business ethics*. Generally speaking, although terms such as *corporate governance*, *strategy* and even *management* occur it is not clear that this reflects research "mainstreaming" as these researchers are, by definition, perceived either by the school leadership (first cohort of survey recipients) or by their academic peers (second cohort of survey recipients) as "specialists" in CSR research.

The research findings underline the importance of the institutional environment of business schools as research topics reflect the respective parameters of academic journals and scholarly conferences where researchers find outlets for their work. The dominance of business ethics, for instance, is not too surprising given the number and longevity of journals in the field (e.g., *Journal of Business Ethics, Business Ethics Quarterly, Business Ethics: A European Review*). The same applies to environmental and sustainability issues which are reflected particularly in various European Journals (e.g., *Business Strategy and the Environment, Sustainable Development, European Environment, Greener Management International, International Journal of Sustainable Development*).

TABLE XIII
Resource provision at European business school

| Dedicated resources | Percentage of schools where resource is available | (absolute numbers) |
|---|---|---|
| Specialist research centre/institute | 21 | (35) |
| Library budget | 20 | (33) |
| Travel and conference budget | 25 | (41) |
| Research resources budget | 21 | (35) |
| Research staff | 21 | (35) |
| Doctoral seminars and conferences | 14 | (23) |
| Inclusion of alumni students | 5 | (9) |
| Other: | | |
|    Book series on ethics and management | | (1) |
|    Formal intra faculty group from different backgrounds (finance, marketing, human resources, etc.) | | (1) |

Similar relationships could be suggested to topics such as accounting (e.g., *Eco Management and Auditing, Accounting, Organization, and Society*). Less popular research labels might be harder to place in suitable journals with business school standing. It may prove that more recent initiatives such as the *Journal of Corporate Citizenship* or *Corporate Governance: International Journal of Business in Society* and the decision of more mainstream journals to produce CSR special issues will contribute to the growth, diversity and institutionalisation of future CSR research.

This impression of a diverse and highly specialized field is reinforced by our data on the work of tomorrow's CSR researchers, PhD students. Again, although CSR itself is specified as a topic, so too are a wide range of other topics which we have grouped under more general headings (Table XII). The range of topics is so broadly spread that we could hardly identify any real clusters. Even the most frequently used term, *corporate social responsibility*, is only used by 5.5% of the respondents. Environmental issues remain prominent but they tend to be embedded in sustainability-related and triple-bottom-line (economic, social and environmental sustainability) research. There is a sense that PhD topics are rather more related to the mainstream business school fields of ''accounting'', ''management'', ''marketing'' or ''strategy'' than is the work of faculty researchers. This could reflect either the supervisors' field orientation or a calculation on the part of students that this will provide a safer avenue for business school careers.

*Research organisations and resources*

An important indicator of CSR's relevance to business schools is the way in which resources are allocated to the topic. The fact that only 35% of respondents answered this question could itself suggest that this is not a priority (unless CSR research was a sufficiently mainstreamed topic that dedicated resources are not required).

About a fifth of the schools taking part in the survey have some dedicated CSR research centres or institutes (Table XIII). We suspect, though, that these schools are over-represented among the total cohort of institutions and may be closer to the absolute, rather than the proportionate, number of European schools with dedicated CSR research centres. That being the case one might conclude that the resource situation is rather sparse and schools, funding bodies and business sponsors have not yet realized the full potential to support CSR research in business schools. Conversely, many business organizations may not consider business schools as the obvious places to fund research in CSR, reflecting van Luijk's assessment that business ethics in Europe as an academic subject has faced considerable problems in gaining currency with industry (van Luijk, 2001).

| Research outcome developed for business | Frequency(%) |
| --- | --- |
| Development of Tools for business | 30 |
| Consulting | 28 |
| Applied/collaborative research | 22 |
| Training and courses for companies | 17 |
| Joint conferences | 7 |

*The relevance of CSR research for industry*

Table XIV indicates that respondents do make their work relevant to industry. It should be noted that answers to this question were provided by only 26% of respondents. One possible reason for the low response rate may be that some CSR scholars see their work as adopting a critical attitude towards mainstream business approaches. One scholar, for example, responded to the question about tools that his research would include by commenting that: "absolutely no tools, tool-based CSR is seen as a problem not as a solution, instead change of mind set, building of alternative leadership and organisation theory". This echos van Luijk's observations of the tension that sometimes characterises business-academy relations in CSR. Interestingly some schools reported working with business-NGOs such as Transparency International.

However nearly all respondents to this question (and thus 25% of the survey respondents) express strong interest in further and closer co-operation with industry in a variety of ways, including:

- collaboration with civil society and business,
- work on CSR with SMEs in particular,
- e-learning tutorial and education tools,
- ethical accounting systems, third party certification and codes of conduct,
- development of corporate values,
- facilitation of workshops and training,
- assisting MNCs in developing countries.

There is probably some sort of overlap here with the growing plethora of CSR consultancies that also seek to advise business on CSR (Fernandez Young et al., 2003).

## Conclusions

This paper set out to address questions about the extent and the ways in which European business education addresses the broad topic of corporate social responsibility. The survey has succeeded in gathering data from a wide range of business education institutions in a variety of countries and has gathered opinion of business school leaders and CSR teachers and researchers. Overall coverage of about a quarter of higher education institutions providing business education has been achieved across Europe.

Our evidence leads us to give a qualified rejection to the blanket claim that business schools are necessarily incapable of educating business managers and leaders in business social responsibility and ethical behaviour. However, our findings are of some but not all business schools taking initiatives in this area.

There is a highly diverse understanding, contextualisation and packaging of CSR teaching. Although the term CSR, its current agenda items and other current business-society agenda items have gained currency, many programmes are grounded in the longer term orientations of business ethics and environmental responsibility.

Two-thirds of our respondents provide some sort of CSR education across the executive/short course, MBA, MA/MSc and BA range, though we are prepared to accept that this sample may over-represent aggregate CSR educational performance across Europe as a whole. A high percentage of respondents are aware of the imperative for mainstreaming CSR, though the measures taken to this end by some institutions would not necessarily be recognised as such by other schools. Although there is a disappointingly low level of CSR scholarships, the extent of engagement of business, NGOs and other academics in CSR education is suggestive of a relatively collaborative approach to CSR education.

Thus far, the main drivers of CSR have been individual faculty members. Respondents indicate that there will be a need for more institutionalised future drivers, particularly in the form of support

from business stakeholders and inclusion in pro-gramme accreditation and ranking systems.

CSR research is similarly heterogeneous with similar emphasis on its ethical and environmental aspects. Interestingly, tomorrow's researchers, the PhD students, have adopted more governance-ori-ented approaches as well as grounding their research in traditional business school research fields. Al-though a surprisingly high percentage (20%) of respondents to the question indicated that they had some dedicated CSR research resources, given that only a small proportion of interlocutors answered this question, we suspect that in fact such focused support remains rare.

There is a strong orientation of CSR research to business relevance.

Notwithstanding our qualified rejection of the most negative views of the capacity of business schools to develop CSR education, questions re-main about the future directions for CSR educa-tion and research. It remains to be seen whether the *future drivers* that our respondents see as critical for the future success of CSR education do take effect. Interestingly, the UK government has re-cently launched a CSR Academy to report on the "development and spread of skills and competences for the practice of CSR".[9] Questions as to the balance of regulation, accreditation and volunteer-ism may be crucial to propitious developments here.

A comparison with earlier studies, in particular with Mahoney's (1990) work in the late 1980s reveals a stunning dynamic of the field over the last decade. His research suggested that the business ethics agenda will possibly broaden and lead to a process of "clarifying social responsibility" (1990, p. 178). Our study shows, that the agenda has in-deed broadened and though "business ethics" still is a strong term in branding courses and programmes in Europe, the terminology has significantly encompassed a whole plethora of terms and ideas. Interestingly, the stronger popularity of the term "business ethics" in continental Europe as com-pared to the U.K. which earlier work identified (Mahoney, 1990: pp. 165–167) is confirmed by our study as well. However Mahoney's anxieties about a potentially inferior role of business ethics as a teaching area in the U.K. has not been echoed by our data: the U.K., though not under the label of

"business ethics", certainly is the leading country in provision of teaching and research of CSR in Europe, both on the level of enrolments as well as institutions offering programmes and modules (Moon and Matten, 2004).

In the light of earlier research, probably the most unexpected finding is the strong interest in CSR among practitioners and industry which is under-scored by our findings in a variety of areas (e.g., see Tables VIII – X and XIV). Our study might even allow a somewhat optimistic answer to questions about the role of ethical issues in business schools and the attitude of business educators to consider social responsibility as part of the curriculum (Mahoney, 1990, pp. 182–183). Particularly our results on mainstreaming of CSR as well as the relatively consistent coverage of the topic in most of the countries surveyed seems to paint a somewhat encouraging picture of the role of the ethical issues on the teaching agenda of business schools in Europe.

There are various ways in which this research can be extended. Most obviously, regarding the question of the development of CSR education it is impor-tant to get some sense of trends. It is our intention to replicate this study in a couple of years. The research findings we have will be used to explore further certain critical themes such as case-studies of *main-streaming* of CSR and *intra-European comparisons* (Moon and Matten, 2004). We would be pleased to support any researchers who wanted to use the questionnaire for non-English language research, especially in countries which were under-repre-sented in our own responses and even beyond Europe.

This paper constitutes an important step in pro-viding an overview over CSR education in Europe. It is intended that our findings focus the attention of individual business schools and their stakeholders on their CSR education provision and that they provide benchmarks for further research in the area.

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## Notes

[1] The survey was designed and administered by the
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Nottingham University Business School. It was con-
ducted in partnership with the European Academy of
Business in Society (EABiS), the European Foundation
for Management Development and the UN Global
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Copenhagen Centre, the European University Associa-
tion, and the Association of MBAs.
[2] http://www.interedu.com/index.php3?file=mcb00000.
[3] It is unclear whether this reflects the relative importance
that the business school leaders attach to CSR or survey
fatigue.
[4] We are grateful to Jan Jonker (Nijmegen School of
Management, The Netherlands and EABiS) for their
contributions to this database.
[5] In order to ensure that the survey included high ranked
business schools this analysis included Equis accredited
business schools which had not already responded.
[6] Nordic Countries include Denmark, Finland, Iceland,
Norway and Sweden; Anglo-Saxon Countries include
the UK and Ireland; Benelux includes Belgium, Luxem-
bourg and The Netherlands; Central Europe includes
Austria, Germany and Switzerland (incl. responses from
Poland and Slovenia); Southern Europe includes Greece,
Italy, Portugal and Spain.
[7] We should add that response rates per individual
question varied from 22 to 86%.
[8] See the EABiS website at www.eabis.org/education/
directory.
[9] DTI Press Release "Next Steps towards Corporate
Social Responsibility Academy" 25/09/2003 P/2003/
483, see www.csracademy.org.uk.

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