Corporate Social Responsibility in China

- Strategies and Challenges

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand the implications of CSR implementation in China and social actors' involvement in this implementation. Previous research indicates that although China has taken the first step towards CSR implementation, it still consists of a challenge. Also, it illustrates that social actors roles in China can be considered differently, and encounter both opportunities and challenges. During the study, a qualitative method was selected and 10 interviews were conducted with social enterprises, NGOs, academics, and companies. The theoretical framework consists of organization theory, as it helps to comprehend the role of CSR and social actors, as well as their impacts and effects related to each other and their environment. In the findings of the social actors' strategies and methods, parallels to empowerment and action research could be drawn and also recognized as new concepts to integrate in the work of Corporate Social Responsibility. Furthermore, different challenges regarding CSR implementation in China could be identified, and are analyzed with a ground in perspectives such as organizational learning and institutional pressures. Different opinions, insights, and views are collected, and utilized to build a discussion around the matter of implementation of CSR and the involvement of social actors. Issues that have been identified regarding the implementation of CSR practices are that companies sometimes lack knowledge of CSR, and engage in CSR for legitimacy, rather than for organizational improvements. Therefore, social actors play a crucial role in shifting approach towards CSR implementation by introducing new ways of thinking and working through raising awareness, providing trainings, and stimulating partnerships. Although, social actors face challenges towards CSR implementation, their involvement in CSR initiatives and strategies can help companies to prepare to organizational change, and, consequently, it may be a step towards the establishment of CSR in China.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, China and social responsibility, social work, partnerships and actors, companies' social responsibility.

Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

China is a country that has had a strong and rapid development these past few years, especially on the trade market. International companies and Chinese businesses have been growing economically, but there are challenges when it comes to the social development of the country (Yang, 2008). The working conditions, human rights and working environment are some of the social issues that have been highlighted with the economic development. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a concept that faces these issues as it is concerned with business social responsibility. Over the past few years, news reports have shown examples of various incidents in supply factories that have demonstrated poor social responsibility practices in China, such as workers suicides, faulty consumer products, toxic emissions in the countryside, overworking and underpaid employees. One striking example of companies that have been accused of violating human rights in China is Foxconn's case. Indeed, workers at Foxconn, a Taiwanese manufacturer of Samsung and Apple's products, were evolving in hard working conditions with low wage, excessive working hours and militant management system and were punished when faulting, this led to an unstable situation and many suicides in the company's factories, and has been wildly covered by the international press (Löfgren 2012, Nandorf, 2011, Wong, 2010). This kind of negative publicity has brought an international attention to social issues in China through which the media have strongly contributed to set CSR on the global corporate agenda. Besides, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with human and labor rights concerns have also been fostering the development of the CSR concept in China. As a result, companies and the Chinese government have attempted to initiate changes in corporate practices. Yet, although CSR awareness is significantly increasing, issues regarding its implementation still remain (Buhman, 2005) It has been discussed if CSR initiatives are really motivated by real purposes or if they are simply "window dressing". In this context, it could be suggested that the Chinese government is likely to be sincere in encouraging CSR, but has also political, social, and economic interests that ease the control of CSR development in China. Furthermore, human rights' developing space is constrained, whereas sustainability benefits of the greatest support from the government. Also, the implementation of CSR consists of a problem in China because there is a gap between theory and practice, therefore an action and discourses often display discrepancies, in particular during the early stage of development (Li-Wen, 2010).

1.1. Presentation of the problem

As stated earlier, the development of the CSR concept has been influenced by a number of actors, however its implementation is unclear and remains a challenge. In the given situation, partnerships have been recognized to be beneficial to solve social issues. This allowed the emergence of other actors to influence corporate behavior towards improving social conditions (Ählström & Sjöström, 2005). Recent studies on collaborative relationships in the work of CSR have proliferated, most of them indicate an increasing appreciation of the potential benefits and added value that can accrue from collaboration in working with CSR. For instance, social workers and NGOs partnering with companies could positively affect labor conditions and welfare due to their ability to work on the field (Arenas et al, 2013; Jamali & Mirshak, 2007; Ngai et al, 2011). In this situation, new actors aiming at encouraging the implementation of CSR in China have emerged. However, the current research concerning new actors engagement in CSR in China is relatively new and limited. Also while numerous management articles can be found, not many social sciences literature on this topic exists.

In order to provide an insightful approach of how CSR is implemented in China, this paper is focusing on how different actors are involved in encouraging companies to engage in Corporate Social Responsibility. Previously, as CSR has been mainly studied in the economic field, it is mostly considered from a business perspective, and the focus has been put on management's implications in CSR (Buhman, 2005). So as to add valuable content to the discussion, this paper takes its interest in addressing CSR from a less explored perspective, namely social sciences'. In this way, the main focus of the paper is to explore the social aspect of CSR by illustrating other actors' role in enhancing CSR-strategies, thereby contrasting with the usual management approach. To achieve this purpose, the thesis involves different actors, which are hereby defined as "social actors". In this research, social actors are defined as professionals that actively encourage and help businesses to engage in and develop successful CSR-strategies. The representatives of social actors in this thesis come from NGOs, social enterprises, academia, consulates, and companies. They all have the aim to promote and enhance CSR practices within corporations. Moreover, they contribute to this paper by providing an inner perspective of the social aspect of CSR in China and, while research has shown that CSR implementation is difficult in practice, these social actors could have the capacity to open new ways of dealing with CSR, in particular since they are competent on the field. Thus, they provide this paper with a deeper understanding of the

potentially beneficial outcomes of CSR over issues like labor rights, working conditions, human rights, living standards and so forth.

1.2. Purpose of this study

The objective of this thesis is to describe and analyze how different social actors have been involved in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in China. In this context, the study aims at examining how strategies, methods and collaborations initiated by social actors are taking place in practice. The study intends to address the following research questions;

- What are the roles of the social actors in inducing CSR?
- Which strategies and methods are they using to implement CSR-practices in China?
- What challenges are social actors facing when inducing CSR- practices?

1.3. Introducing the concept of CSR

In 2000 the UN Global Compact launched ten principles based on human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption. It was a strategic policy initiative that encourages businesses to align their operations. The companies that join the Global Compact agree to operate on the basis of these principles. Each year, the member companies should present how they have worked with them. These principles could be seen as the CSR standards, but as CSR is not legally binding, companies do not have to follow them (Karlsson, 2011).

A wide variety of CSR's definitions can be found as CSR has been defined by many different organizations. All these definitions, however, present common patterns that help to understand the concept of CSR, not as a fixed set of goals, but rather as a constantly evolving concept. Indeed, it is suggested that CSR has the purpose of simultaneously integrating economic considerations with environmental and social needs. Thus, as CSR is a moving concept and different definitions highlight different sides of this concept, it seems reasonable to address the issue with several points of views.

The European Union and World Business Council for Sustainable Development's definitions are the most commonly found official definitions of CSR and the Chinese Government's

insight about CSR implementation has obviously a great interest in concern with the present research, all three display slight nuances regarding the concept of CSR and are relevant in regard of this paper.

European Union
"A concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (Commission Green Paper, 2001).

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)
"Corporate Social Responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the community and society at large" (WBCSD, 1999).

Chinese Government
Corporations should carry out their social responsibilities by abiding by all relevant laws, regulations, and business ethics codes. While pursuing economic profits, corporations are held responsible by shareholders, employees, consumers, suppliers, communities, and other stakeholders. Moreover, corporations have responsibilities to protect the environment (Yang, 2008).

1.3.1. The definition of CSR in this study

Although CSR is recognized as a growing concern in a globalized economy and being at the top of businesses' agenda, there is still no sign of consensus on its structures, procedures or rules. Corporate responsibility, corporate citizenship, corporate social opportunity and responsible business are some of its variant terms. However, CSR is a commonly used term that addresses the measurement and improvement of business performance on economic, social and environmental dimensions, and the report of these activities to stakeholders. That said, there are various types of CSR, one of which is philanthropic giving. Yet, the division between CSR and philanthropy will be drawn in this thesis. Philanthropy refers to charity activities that a company takes part in, such as donations to community, hospitals, schools, and scholarships, and has little to do with the practice of business, therefore it is not really in interest of the purpose and aim of this thesis. Companies focusing on these aspects could be seen as aiming at improving the company's image.

1.4. Delimitations

Some limits have to be taken into account when reading the present thesis. The research it does not focus on specific companies or organizations; thereby it is not representative of the situation of particular industries that come with their own characteristics. The research cannot be used to accurately understand the situation of CSR in China for NGOs or specific companies; it would rather be utilized to grasp a general understanding of CSR in China and social actors' role. The aim is at drawing a picture of actors that focus on encouraging CSR-practices, and therefore employees, consumers and managers are not included. However one executive director is included in this thesis as a social actor, this due to that the representative is working with the company's social responsibility in China. Likewise as mentioned earlier, the philanthropy charitable contribution on the matter is not included in this thesis either.

1.6. The Minor Field Study

This research was conducted through a Minor Field Study in Beijing China. The financial support was provided from SIDA, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and given to the researcher by Stockholm's University. This thesis is a qualitative study of the concept of CSR in China and of social actors' role in enhancing CSR-strategies based on interviews with representatives of companies and organizations in China. All of the interviewees were conducted in Beijing and contacts were held from the Center for Child Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility (CCR CSR). In total 10 interviews were done during November and December 2013. The results of the Minor Field Study will be presented in the following chapters.

1.7. Disposition of the thesis

The first chapter in this thesis, as already discussed, presents an introduction to the research topic and purpose of the thesis. A brief presentation of the main issues is exposed as well as the definition of the concept CSR and the study's delimitations. The next chapter provides a review of previous research in the area, where various studies are presented concerning Corporate Social Responsibility, in China and global. Following the thesis theoretical framework, organization theory will be presented and the methodology process will be

explained. Henceforth the empirical analysis will be provided with a background in organization theory, and result of concepts such as empowerment and action reserach. Finally, a discussion is presented with conclusions and suggestions for future research. On the following reference and an appendix with the interview guide can be found.

2. Previous research

Along with growing corporate interest in today's business world, academic interest in this field has increased as well. Especially in the recent years an extensive research has been conducted in the CSR field. There is both national and international research on CSR that examines the concept and the growing concerns about environmental and social responsibility in foreign as well as some domestic companies in China. The study of Darigan and Post (2009) describes the increasing importance of CSR in China as a primordial part of business strategy. Indeed, CSR can foster the creation of a harmonious interrelation of business with society, and can increase social capital in China. The on-field research of the authors shows that CSR is expanding where critical behavioral changes in consumers, corporations, and non-profit organizations are occurring. In the fast growing Chinese society, noteworthy opportunities have emerged for companies, especially concerning CSR that develops social welfare. Besides, the authors present the positive changes materialized by CSR such as job skills training initiatives, improvements of working conditions, and strategic partnerships.

Li-Wen (2010), shows how laws and regulations, governmental instructions and guidelines, non-governmental standards and organizations have appeared since CSR actions are undertaken in China. The author questions whether these initiatives serve China's international image or are representative of an effective CSR implementation. Likewise, while the remarkable economic growth of China since the 1980s is acknowledged, social and environmental costs are pointed out. Besides, the article stipulates that multinational companies (MNCs) and the government push for CSR undertakings, in particular MNCs push their Chinese suppliers to engage in CSR. The author emphasizes whether these initiatives are motivated by real purposes or are simply "window dressing". Nevertheless, the implementation gap does not mean that CSR initiatives in China are only "window dressing". Indeed, the early stage of development, despite rarely resulting in a complete implementation, can contribute to raising awareness and defining the process of CSR. Thus, the recent

evolution of CSR in China may be considered positively as China is taking the first step towards CSR implementation.

In her work, Buhmann (2005) pinpoints the challenging effects of environmental issues, as well as human and labor rights issues over the implementation of CSR in China. She also describes the application of legal standards and legislations in China as the main obstacle to CSR's implementation. This due to that the particularities of Chinese legislation and especially weaknesses in implementation, including enforcement, pose an additional challenge to corporations that care about their reputation in relation to CSR topics. Nonetheless, the author precise that companies can be the main contributors of the enforcement of international law in China, namely by raising awareness and knowledge of international standards through CSR. Moreover, companies could enhance the situation by presenting themselves as models and by doing the "right thing", as well as dialoguing and acting through, on behalf of, and for their stakeholders. The article indicates that the increasing number of foreign companies in China and of Chinese companies supplying foreign companies would make the enforcement of international standards significant. There are examples are given of how some CSR-conscious foreign companies that work in or supply from China handle social and environmental responsibility, that could an impact for other companies. Also if the issues such as enactment and implementation of labor standards and regulation of environmental protection is raised my foreign companies it may be considered as political topics by the government of China. In these ways foreign companies could strengthen the implementation of law. The author gives perspective on how cooperation between foreign companies and the Chinese government could result in the implementation of legal standards, which are crucial to the success of these companies and the attraction of foreign investment in China. It argues that, eventually, this cooperation, when addressing CSR issues, would likely lead to a more sustainable development of China.

Collaborative relationships in the pursuit of CSR have proliferated in recent years. There are research that indicates an increasing appreciation of the potential benefits and added value that can accrue from collaboration and the powerful synergies that can develop.

Arenas et al (2013) are interested in the role of third parties, such as trade unions, socially responsible investors, nonprofits devoted to environmental research and social inclusion. The authors point out the aspects of confrontation and collaboration of the business world with the

civil society by analyzing their interactions. Their results indicate that, regardless of previous confrontations, collaboration between businesses and the civil society is possible. In this context, third party organizations have a role of influencer and can contribute to collaboration thanks to their ability to act upon companies, to exist on the field, and to connect disparate organizations. Similarly, Jamali and Mirshak (2007) study NGOs-businesses partnerships and they assert that interests in CSR collaborations and partnerships are growing. However, their study shows that these partnerships are used to develop favorable images of organizations rather than to improve CSR work. Henceforth, the two authors call for more sense of responsibility and commitment when partnerships between NGOs and businesses are formed. They argue that the partnership has to be perceived as an opportunity for both sides, and thereby businesses and NGOs should set up common goals, define relationships, manage expectations, and build mutual learning and commitment. According to the authors, these are the sine qua non conditions for partnerships to generate significant benefits of CSR.

Boehm (2009) compares the mindsets of social workers and business employees towards the role of social workers in business community involvement and the development of business community involvement. As a result, the study reveals that the two groups display similarities and that social responsibility can lead to reciprocally valuable outcomes. Yet, the study also concedes discrepancies, namely concerning priorities. It shows that business are not always willing to engage in activities that are directly tied to the field of social work (welfare, social change, and informal education), instead they are more committed to selecting fields of business social responsibility, such as health or education, because these project could enhance more positive public relations and advantages. Another difference of point of view that this study identifies is that business employees feel more comfortable when social workers are less influent regarding social responsibility. Businesses expect social workers to focus more on consultative positions and than in the decision-making process whereas social workers prefer to have more influence. The research highlight how businesses are entering fields in which social workers have long been active and that the involvement of social workers can significantly contribute to the development of business social responsibility. Nevertheless, the author ponders this point by stipulating that social workers are responsible for the status of their own profession.

Previous research has also been done on how social workers in China could develop a multi-stakeholder approach in implementing corporate codes and in improving the labor welfare.

Ngai et al (2011) indicate that while codes of conduct exist in Chinese factories, Chinese workers are most often unknowing of their existence and, thereby are not in the position to ensure the respect of their rights. The research evaluates the impact of social workers on the Chinese workers' negotiation possibilities, and it appears that their work is embodied with both challenges and opportunities. In the study, social workers, in order to better understand the problems and challenges encountered by the factory workers, stayed in the factory; their responsibility was then to improve the factory workers' participation and representation. In order to do so, social workers trained the workers and endorsed consultant roles, they also aimed at empowering the workers so as to make them self-responsible and in command of their own group. It resulted in noteworthy improvements for the factory workers regarding workers' organization, capacity of negotiation, and knowledge of labor rights and international labor standards. However, it also resulted in highlighting the difficult character of empowering the workers, of developing participation and representation, and of making of standards and regulations a reality. The authors perceive social workers at the heart of the business and social processes, surrounded by stakeholders, suppliers, CSR representatives, and NGOs, they also express the view that workers in China should gain power in order to become real stakeholders. They argue that these workers' presence in the CSR process is necessary to reach a durable, consistent, and active CSR approach, and that social workers, in this regard, have a role to play as they are able to manage the human and social aspects of the CSR work.

CSR is the main topic of interest of the previous research. It shows that CSR can lead to social development through its different tools and devices. However, the previous research has allowed the researcher to recognize the difficulty of implementing CSR in China due to social, economic, cultural, and political constraints. Besides, research has been conducted about partnerships and has shown the positive outcomes of partnerships and collaborative work for the implementation of CSR in China. On this bases this thesis take an interest in to further elaborate in which way collaboration could be beneficial and how different actors could be involved in CSR performances in China.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1. Organization theory

Organization theory has a social science background and is interested in studying organizational behavior and interaction in social contexts (McAuley et al, 2007), It provides explanation regarding the importance of organization and the comprehension of the impact of the latter upon people through behaviors and practices (ibid). Organizations have an impact on different aspects of our lives and therefore by understanding it, it helps us to see the consequences of the practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2001). There is an increasing need for managers to be attentive to their own process of learning as much as to the process of learning of the people that they are supporting. Indeed, in order to foster growth, a constant reflection on experience and sharing of knowledge is necessary (ibid)

3.1.1. Organizational Learning

Organizational learning, as part of organization theory, is a process that stimulates and encourages the incorporation of new ideas and/or practices in organizations. It expresses that change, through the recognition of a need for change and changes in ways of doing and thinking, is a major factor of the organizational life (Hatch, 2006).

Also, according to Schön and Argyris (1978), organizations are learning systems where change can, not only improve situations and conditions, but also develop genuine structures that spark learning and knowledge development. However, actions that would lead to this virtuous circle are not always undertaken. Schön and Argyris (1978) identify two ways used by organizations to handle change. In the first place, when something goes wrong in an organization and change is needed to solve the situation, the organization can simply look for another strategy, deal with the problem, implement a new way of doing, and, as a result, solve the issue by staying within the governing variables, this is defined as single-loop learning. The authors argue that due to the fact that single-loop learning focuses more on operationalizing rather than questioning, it prevents the organization from discovering the roots of the problem. Therefore, organizations are unable to create their own standards in terms of ways of doing and behaving. In the second place, organizations can consider questioning as more important than operationalizing. In order to do so, Schön and Argyris (1978) recommend questioning the governing variables themselves, this they define as

double-loop learning. Moreover, they argue that double-loop learning can help to determine appropriate behaviors so as to generate learning loops that augment knowledge and awareness, consequently helping organizations to define their own fundamental operating criteria, behavior, and identity. For example, appropriate trainings and development opportunities can enable employees to reorganize their work. This kind of learning may reshape the governing variables; therefore strategies and constructs may be modified and lead to the appearance of a learning organization (ibid).

Besides, Senge (1994) introduced a framework that can stimulate organizational learning as organizations need to be aware of how their behavior can impact and influence society. Organizations often lack tools and ideas to handle the situations they face, The framework of organizational learning elements such as guiding visions, guiding means, and practical resources application. Senge (1994) outlined the importance of dialogue in organizations, in particular regarding team learning; and expressed the necessity of using this framework with a long-term perspective (Senge, 1994).

Organizational learning may be relevant when addressing the issue of social actors and CSR in China. As a matter of fact, companies have been increasingly taking into account the importance of social issues, and some of them, attempting to involve their stakeholders in the CSR process, have acknowledged the necessity for organizational change. Therefore, it appears that companies have started to engage in learning processes so as to address CSR. Furthermore, social actors that are committed to improve CSR implementation in China may motivate organizations to engage in processes similar to organizational learning, and may offer companies services and advices that could be related to these.

3.1.2. New institutional perspective

One of organization theory main issues lies in the difficulty to comprehend the construction of organizational structures, however institutionalization is a means that can help in this regard, as it allows a deeper understanding of the situation through integration of social processes, obligations, or actualities with social thought and action. In the 1940s, organization study started to become an esteemed field, therefore it appeared logical to research workers to apply institutional arguments to the structural and behavioral aspects of organizations. This new field of study, finally called new institutional theory, responds to different understandings.

Nonetheless, the essence of this notion consists of the fact that organizations are modifying agents of their environment (Scott, 2001).

The concept of new institutionalism perspective helps to understand the effect of organizations over their environment, thereby unveiling conflicting facets of reality towards organizations. Indeed, organizations seem to construct their reactions depending on the pressures they undergo, these pressures are diverse and multiple and can be emitted by regulatory systems, norms, beliefs, and expectations of the environment, in other words they are created by external factors and agents acting outside the organization (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2001).

Scott (2001) asserts that the people drawing the main lines of new institutionalism are analysts that use a top-down approach to outline the importance of global organizations or nation-states. In fact, it seems that some institutions play a crucial role in increasing the pressures for organizational change, for example nation-states utilize antitrust, laws, and regulations (Scott, 2001). Other important actors include consumers, NGOs, governments, and medias. All of the messages sent by these actors create a sort of set of codes and norms according to which organizations are expected to behave. In truth, it consists of a line of conduit that organizations should respect and follow (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2001). According to Meyer and Rowan (1977) organizations are required to apply these guidelines to their own organizational structure in order to succeed in their environment. Nevertheless, they are, in theory, not bound to follow them as no law or regulation exists. Therefore, despite the pressures an organization can receive, engaging in institutional changes remains an autonomous decision. However, the institutional environment strongly pushes organizations towards the implementation of practices and procedures that they judge socially positive, thus organizations that are shifting approaches and committing to norms and agendas increase their ethic, respectability, and perspectives of growth, even though these positive outcomes rely on the effectiveness of the undertook practices and procedures.

Moreover, the apparent policies of organizations are disconnected from their practices, namely because organizations create policies that display the theoretical qualities wished by the institutional actors, therefore, these lack practical insights and, consequently, creates a gap between discourse and actions of organizations, which, in other words, means that what organizations say they do and what they do is different. Thus, when organizations follow

institutional pressures and take organizational turns they do it more for the legitimacy that results of it than for performance improvements. Indeed, legitimacy is a key element for organizational durability and external recognition, thence organizations implement tools and devices created externally that are not truly beneficial in terms of social and internal improvements. As a result, one can argue that organizations aim at gaining social acceptance and status, without taking the social performance improvement in consideration (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Hence, these institutionalized organizations are willing to assure a positive external appearance of their structures, therefore they reduce inspections and evaluations of activities. Also, as inspections and evaluations can lead to conflicting situations and loss of legitimacy. Eventually, the implications of managers in the organizational process could be measured as they have the power to shape organizational change and shift in organizational structures. In particular the adjustment of managerial decisions according to the existence of institutions and/or structural norms in the environment of the organization could lead to know whether organizations use structural change solely for legitimacy or for both legitimacy and the attendance to practical activities (ibid).

The new institutional perspective has been chosen as an analytical tool as it analyzes how organizations are affected by their external factors. In the context of Corporate Social Responsibility, the institutional perspective could provide valuable insight on the development and implementation of CSR-strategies within corporations.

4. Methodology

4.1. The research process

The purpose of the study is to examine how different actors are working with inducing companies to develop successful CSR strategies. In order to be able to answer the purpose of the study a qualitative approach is used. Bryman (2002) argues that qualitative method is useful for understanding a social phenomena and attitudes. In qualitative methods a hermeneutic approach is in general used. Hermeneutic approach emphasizes on an understanding and interpretation of social reality, and therefore is relevant to social science research because a lot of the data material in qualitative studies consists of meaningful phenomena, such as behaviors, human practices etc. These meaningful phenomena must be interpreted in order to be understood (Bryman 2002; Gilje & Grimen, 2007). Therefore, the qualitative method is considered to be suitable for this study since the purpose is to

understand the concept CSR and social actor's role and strategies to enhance it in China. This study has been based on a hermeneutic approach, in which it enabled the researcher to give a meaning to the interviewees' expressions of CSR in China by using the theory.

4.2. Data collection

The qualitative data collected consisted of both interviews with the selected interviewees and existing literature and studies on the subject. The fact that the data collection combines the two different sources would create a more accurate picture and can credibly substantiate the answers to my questions (Jacobsen, 2002).

4.3. Literature searching

The research process started with examining the literature available on the subject of CSR in China. The existing literature has been used to gain knowledge of how CSR can be defined and also to broaden the information needed for this thesis. This kind of data collection is necessary as an addition to the data from the interviews (Jacobsen, 2002). The literature was searched in the Universities databases, research articles and textbooks. Keywords that were used were Corporate Social Responsibility, China and social responsibility, social work, partnerships and actors, companies' social responsibility. Literature and research that was found generated additional relevant literature.

4.4. Selection of interviewees

In this study a method called snowball sampling have been used in the selection of interviewees. Snowball sampling is a type of convenience sample, characterized by the researcher at first trying to make contact with a small number of people and then using them to make contact with additional interviewees (Bryman, 2002). In the process of contacting and to conduct the interviews, the Center for Child Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility (CCR CSR) in Beijing, China played an active and important role in helping me by introducing possible interviewees that would be suitable for my study. Then through these interviewees, I asked for contact to other potential interviewees in order to increase the number of respondents. Similar to snowball sample as it is non- probability samples because the sample was not done randomly (Bryman, 2002). The purpose of the thesis gave an

indication of what actors could be potential interviewees. Therefore, proceeding from the purpose of the study, the selection of interviewees came from purposeful sampling (Bryman, 2002). The strategic selection of interviewees was not guided by any specific criteria other than that they should be actors working with the social aspect of CSR-related issues in China. The priority was given to actors in different organizations who were thought to possibly provide varying opinions and attitudes on the matter. The selection involved social enterprises, organizations, NGOs, company representative and also academic representatives, all working with CSR and focus on the social aspect but with different corporations in order to get a wider perspective of the social actors involved in the CSR work.

4.5. Confidentiality of interviewees

Throughout the text, it is important to respect the confidentiality of the identities of the interviewees and the material that has been shared. The interviewees have been granted anonymity in the thesis, as they requested that neither their personal nor organizational name could be identified. This has been taken into consideration as I distinguish between the interviewees with the help of letters (A-J). However, in order to provide some insights about the interviewees' roles and what kind of organization they represent, a brief presentation can be found in the following section.

4.6. Presentation of the interviewees

The interviewees, who are representatives of social actors, come from NGOs, social enterprises, companies, consulates, and the academia. It can be important to outline that national NGOs are Chinese NGOS. However, these NGOs work with CSR everywhere in China, and not only locally.

Interviewee A

A representative from a global company was interviewed in order to get the view from a business perspective. The interviewee is the executive director of the company's China office, and is responsible on working with the company's role in the Chinese context and its social responsibility. In this includes the work of the company's employees and contribution to the Chinese society. The company is leading in manufacturers of commercial vehicles and has their China office in Beijing. The interview was conducted 5th of November 2013.

Interviewee B

The interviewee is a representative of a national federation of the textile industry in China. It is an non-profit organization that works with international and domestic companies to enhance CSR initiatives in China. The interviewee is the project manager of the organizations social responsibility section. The interview was held on 6th of November 2013.

Interviewee C

The interviewee works in the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in China with the objective to raise CSR knowledge and implementation among business and governmental organisations. The interview was held on 7th of November 2013.

Interviewee D

The interviewee is a representative of a social enterprise in China. The organization sells its competence and expertise to help companies in their work of improving CSR. The social enterprise is focusing on CSR-strategies related to child-rights and improvement in children's lives. The interviewee is the senior technical advisor of the social enterprise. The interview was held on 18th of November 2013.

Interviewee E

The China specialist in an international non-profit organization was interviewed in order to gain knowledge of how the organization works with CSR-strategies in China. The organization is working with providing frameworks as guidance reporting as a way for organization to become more sustainable. Their mission is providing standard practice for all companies and organizations. The interview was conducted 22th of November 2013.

Interviewee F

The interviewee is the secretary general of an international non-profit-organization. The organization has established a CSR-center in China working with providing help to companies on how to work with CSR. The interviewee has several years of working experience with CSR, and a knowledge and understanding especially in association with China. The interview was held on 23th of November 2013.

Interviewee G

The interviewee is a social entrepreneur, global speaker, senior executive with experience in leadership, organizational capacity building, and also management knowledge in NGOs. The interviewee works with teaching social works students in the university in the field of CSR as well with NGO in order to strengthen their capacity and role in the CSR field in China. The work with university students, social service professionals, business professional and volunteer population is given this professor a deep knowledge and expertise of understanding the work of CSR in China. The interview was held on 25th of November 2013.

Interviewee H

A representative from an United Nation agency was interviewed. The interviewee is the national project officer of sustaining competitive and responsible enterprises in the China office. The organizations work involves promoting decent employment for workers, such as promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues in China. The interview was held on 25th of November 2013.

Interviewee I

The organization is an international nonprofit business association working with social responsibility solutions to business. Their mission is to, through advisory services, training, education and research, promote collaboration among companies and their stakeholders for improving working conditions and sustainability in China: The interviewee is the manager of advisory services in China. The interview was held on 5th of December 2013.

Interviewee J

The organization is a non-profit research institute with its actions and research centering on CSR and sustainability of non-profit sectors. The research institute takes the initiative in encouraging the participation of NGOs in CSR, enriching the resources and extending the space of civil society. The institute provide with researches as well with suggestions for improvement of management, and guidelines of actions for Chinese companies. The interviewee was one of the assistant researchers at the institute. The interview was held on 6th of December 2013.

4.7. Interviews procedure

In this study 10 interviews were conducted with different representatives in the field of CSR in China. All of the interviews were taken place in Beijing in China, and were the important primary source for the study. I established contacts with different actors in the working field of CSR through my contact persons at the CCR CSR center. With their help I was able to get in contact with relevant actors working in the field that could be suitable interviewees.

In the first step I contacted the interviewees through email. An email was sent to the concerned with information about the study, the purpose and approach and asking for a meeting. Before carrying out the interviews I read information about their work on CSR to have some pre-knowledge and background information. Bryman (2002) emphasizes that the interpretation and understanding of what the interviewees questioned talks, facilitated by knowing in and become more familiar with the investigation (Bryman, 2002).

The interviews took place most often in the interviewee' own office, two of the interviews were conducted at public environment, such as coffee places and one interview were through Skype. The interviewees were able to choose where it would be more convenient for them in order to create a comfortable situation for them. Each interview lasted an average of one and a half hours where they shared their expertise in, and understanding of, the CSR strategies in a Chinese context. In attempt to not lose any of the information the majority of the interviews were recorded and during the interviews also notes were taken to document the results. Bryman (2002) view recording and transcription as important aspects to control what the interviewee has said, which consequently could lead to less misinterpretation and a more careful analysis. However attempts were initially made to record all the interviews, but during some situations such as the ones that were conducted on public places and through Skype, this was not convenient. Instead, extensive notes were taken during the interviews and documented the results afterwards. After the interviews all the empirical information was transcribed on the computer. This was always done after the interviews in order to lose the least information as possible. Most of the interviewees were held in English as all of the interviewees were spoken English well. In these cases the transcriptions have directly been made from the recordings and the notes that were taken during the interviews. Some of the interviews were held on Swedish as it was the mother tongue of a few of the interviewees, in

these cases the transcription was first done into Swedish, and then formed into English when quotes and statements have been used been.

4.8. Interview guide

Before the interviews an interview guide of a semi-structured form was conducted. To manage the mix of the interviews the interview guide contained central themes that were based on the study's purpose and from these themes questions were developed. The predefined interview guide contained specific questions and as much as possible non-leading and open questions about the representatives' work with implementing CSR. According to Kvale (1997) a semi-structured guide provides an overview of the topics to be discussed and suggestions for questions that can be asked. Since CSR is an extensive area of studying it was more suitable to have predetermined interview guide to focus on relevant areas and provide a good balance between flexibility and standardization. Dalen (2007) describes what should be considered in the formulation of the questions. According to Dalen (2007) the interview questions should be clear and not leading. It is also important to consider asking questions that require some knowledge of the interviewees. Questions should also follow a certain order to facilitate conversation (Dalen, 2007). This was taking into consideration when the questions for the interview guide were developed. The advantage with semi-structured interviews is that it has a conversational character and provides certain structure while still being open and flexible, which could bring more information. This is a suitable form this thesis. The interviewees shared their experience about inducing CSR-strategies and the concept of CSR in China, the fact that the questions wore open the interviews become more like a conversation and was to an advantage. As a result the interviewees had space to reflect over their answers and freedom to add and it was also convenient with this interview structure as it worked in the different interviews

4.9. Analytical process

All the interviews were transcribed to pursue an overview of the interview material. According to Kvale (1997) transcripts of interview bring a structure to what has been said and an overview of the material that facilitates the further analysis (Kvale, 1997). Initially the collected empirical material was read through to gain an overall impression, followed by a selection of the opinion and attitudes that were indicating a phenomenon. Kvale (1997) describes an analytic tool where long sentences that respondents express are organized more

concisely, and are worded and shortened (Kvale, 1997). In this thesis, examples of short statements have been used in order to illustrate the interviewees' expression. This analytic tool was used in order to get a perspective of the interviewees' statements and to get the essence of the interviewees' responses and, thus, obtain a complete picture. According to Kvale (1997), it is a good way to give new perspectives on the text. Henceforth, the findings from the interviewees have been recognized into some themes that have created the themes for the analysis, such as raising awareness, partnerships, motives for CSR initiatives etc.

4.10. Ethical considerations

Most of the interviewees requested anonymity. To ensure confidentiality no actual name has been disguised. Confidentiality requirement means that participants should be given confidentiality; it means that respondents can remain anonymous when the results will be communicated and presented. Therefore, the interviewees are named in letters and their gender, as well as the names of their organizations have not been exposed. A presentation of the interviewees, their roles, and their organizations has, however, been given in order for the reader to have an understanding of which actor they represent without losing confidentiality. The interviewees were informed of the research purpose, that participation is voluntary and that the data collected will not be used for any other purpose than the study's (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). Finally, all participants were offered an example of the thesis if they were interested.

4.11. Methodological challenges

When it comes to the validity of the study, it is needed that there is consistency in the research, on what is observed and the theoretical perspectives, and also whether the conceptual interpretations are found in the data (Kvale, 1997). This thesis did not make any attempt to create a generalization of social actors' involvement, rather it intends to provide an understanding of the social actors involvement in CSR. Regarding reliability, Kvale (1997) states that a study's reliability may be affected if there are different people who transcribe the interviews, which are not the case in this study where there is only one researcher. Nevertheless, the downside is that there may be a risk for some subjectivity in the analysis. To ensure the accuracy of the information provided in the analysis, I tried to have this in mind and to illustrate the empirical findings through quotes and statements from the different interviewees. This way, the results and analysis could be more trustworthy and could create a

better understanding for the analysis, hence it could be one way to face the risk of my impact on the outcome of the analysis.

It would have been ultimate to also conduct interviews with social workers representatives, but due to some limitations this was not possible. It was hard to get in contact with social workers working in the field of CSR and the ones known working with it CSR was in local NGOs services. Several of the local NGOs in China are not legally registered due China's bureaucratic legal system which makes it difficult for NGOs to make a running. Therefore many of these NGOs are not registered, which made it hard to find contact details for a possible interview. One of the interviewee shared a contact with NGOs where social workers were based. Although, attempts were made from both the researcher and the NGO to find a Chinese-English translator within the researcher's budget limitations, no translator was available within the budget range fixed by the researcher, leading to the impossibility to conduct the interview. Further, another issue arose when it became clear that the interviewees' contacts, who were social workers, were based in factories in other provinces in China, thenceforth the interviews were difficult to arrange. Still willing to include the view of social workers role in CSR, the researcher constructed questions in the interview guide in order to collect the interviewees' position on the matter. Moreover, as some of the interviewees had experience of working with social workers, they could share it with the interviewer, thereby delivering knowledge about the social workers' position in CSR in China.

Another methodology that could be discussed is the confidentiality of the social actors in this study. As the interviewees and the organizations they represent are not identified, it could lead for some challenges regarding the transparency and reliability of the thesis. The presentation of the interviewees and their organization can hopefully aid in compensating for these challenges.

Finally a methodology challenge worth being mentioned is that during three of the interviews there was no recording, meaning that some information may have been lost during the interviews and thereby reduces the reliability of the study. Bryman (2002) believe that recording interviews is a compulsory exercise, in order to obtain a full statement of the material. Although, as Kvale (1997) claim, it does not necessary have to be an issue while there are also benefits of active listening. Kvale (1997) demonstrates that an interview could

also be registered through the researchers capacity to remember, the researcher trust the memory and note the essential aspects of the interviews. In these situations I made the attempt to hold detailed notes during the interviews. The notes together with the ability to remember could contribute to increase the reliability.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1. Methods and strategies

It was pointed out by the interviewees that the issues of Corporate Social Responsibility were mostly found in the supply chains, namely in the factories where working conditions, working environments and management systems can consist of diverse problems. When the social actors explained the work of inducing CSR, it was also mostly found that their work takes place in the factories, since most of the issues occurred there. As some of the interviewees illustrated;

> There are big issues when coming in the factories where the workplace involves overtime working, children working, and workplace discrimination (Interviewee C, 7 November 2013).

> In China we are facing many social issues, safety, labor, corruption, environmental pollution. Companies can be really helpful in a lot of these issues by being transparent about it and their impacts (Interviewee E, 22 November 2013).

5.1.1. Raising awareness

The interviewees were asked to describe how they are working with implementing CSR. They presented different strategies that consisted of raising awareness, increasing knowledge, and providing trainings, so as to implement CSR in companies.

The interviewees described that they are having seminars and workshops where they invite companies to raise CSR awareness:

> We also use examples when we try to motivate. We always collect examples of good practices/factories to share. We also organize inspiration sharing on workshops and so on, so that each factory can share how they do, so that they can learn from each other (Interviewee H, 25 November 2013).

We are trying to achieve awareness raising, by talking about what CSR means, why, how and what to do to the Chinese government and Chinese companies as well as international businesses. We talk about the different standards, management and reporting. We arrange conferences and seminars where we invite different international companies working with CSR in China to describe about their work and also CSR-consultants that provide lectures about CSR-principles and guidelines. Giving examples of how some companies work with social issues. We want to raise the awareness that CSR is not charity, it is about changes companies could do (Interviewee C, 7 November 2013).

We provide guidelines for sustainable reporting where focus is on that organizations need to find the areas/topics that are relevant for their organizations and their stakeholders. We encourage them to engage the stakeholders in the organization development […] A lot of companies are not seeing or dealing with the real issues. They are reporting in their CSR-reports about helping in their local companies and some projects, but these are not necessarily the issues that the stakeholders are concerned about, instead the issues maybe is corruption, working standards or so […] The most important is that reporting can help them to manage risk and difficulties, and also their impacts, so therefore it is important that they know how to do it, which we are trying to provide (Interviewee E, 22 November 2013).

The interviewees mentioned raising CSR awareness as one strategy, as a way to describe the meaning of CSR, and as a guide to understand how CSR work could be done. They gave some examples such as using companies working with social matters as an inspiration, but also provided guidelines for what the companies could do. It could be considered that awareness is an important aspect in the process, especially when starting the CSR work. For example, companies could get interested and involved in CSR if they would hear about successful examples of CSR implementation in other companies. The interviewees also emphasize the work of reporting system as a way to make the issues visible and to identify ways to solve them. For instance, the interviewees provide help to companies with how to write CSR reports.

Other strategies that could be related to raising awareness were illustrated by interviewee D and interviewee J. It could be understood that companies do not have the knowledge of the existing issues, therefore the interviewees provide insights that help to recognize the issues, and, consequently, make them understandable and identifiable to companies. This way, companies could be aware of what their specific issues are and they could start dealing with it.

We have various seminars for companies where we talk about our studies on different social issues such as children's rights and migrant workers. We invite companies and give information about what studies have shown and what we have worked with. The companies that are interested will come and listen and so we get contacts. But we are also actively seeking up companies and raising the awareness by providing information about the social issues that exist (Interviewee D, 18 November 2013).

We have field research where we talk to the stakeholders and then we will present their thinking to the companies. One example given is the tea process. The problem is that the farmers use chemicals because the tea grows faster and increase their productive. So the farmers don't fulfill the company's demands on being sustainable. So the company finds it hard to deal with that the farmers shouldn't use chemical. So they asked us to do a research and see what the farmers' demands and needs are. If farmers have decent working conditions and payments and so[…]The companies want know the Chinese conditions but because many are foreigners and they don't know how to do that, so the ask for our services and we do research and see for example what are the farmers concerns, and then companies can work on this (Interviewee J, 6 December 2013)

According to Senge (1994) organizations need to be aware of how their behavior can impact and influence society. Organizations often lack tools and ideas to handle the situations they face, whereas there is an increasing need for managers to be attentive to their own process of learning as much as to the process of learning of their employees, in which reflection and knowledge is necessary (McNiff & Whitehead, 2001; Senge, 1994). This could be applied to CSR and the interviewees' effort of raising knowledge of CSR. There seems to be a need for raising awareness among companies about the importance of CSR. In this context, it could be seen that the interviewees are making effort to provide tools, such as knowledge on existing social issues, and manuals as well as guidelines to the companies, in order to encourage companies to implement CSR. This process could be related to organizational learning, as it stimulates and encourages companies to integrate new ideas and practices in their organizations through the recognition of a need for change (Hatch, 2006).

5.1.2. Training programs

Besides, the interviewees stipulated that another important tool to implement CSR strategies in companies is training programs.The trainings are described to mostly take place in the factories, with the managers and employees, there the programs educate and train the participants to work with and implement CSR in their working environment. The executive

director of a global company, interviewee A describes an training programs in CSR as training the employees in security, health and environmental matters. The managers get trained in order to then train the employees. The concept is that the trainings should come from the companies, to the managers in the factories, and then to the employees where the managers should be the cornerstones of change.

> We have a program in educating issues such as security, health and environmental. Each manager in the factories is responsible for training his/her employees about these factors. Managers are provided training in this and then in turn they will train the employees, the chain looks like this, from corporate offices to suppliers such as managers and employees […]We have a mechanic training in China. The program is considered one of the best in the country and has raised the status of the mechanic. It offers young people a chance to get an education and makes their families proud and happy. Young people who receive this training will be educated and also guaranteed job at our company. This is one way to work with social issues and development but while doing so it also benefits us as a company because they may be good employees. This is CSR (Interviewee A, 5 November 2013).

One of the interviewees describes the projects they have for creating a better working environment for working parents and young workers as they have done reports and identified it as an issue. The interviewee describes that the factories are placed often far away from their cities and the work involves long working hours. Parents that are being away from their children are described to be worried and affected by these issues, especially migrant workers that are away from the children sometimes for a really long time. Also, young workers are described to have tough working conditions, especially since most of them are living in the factories where leisures are rare. Also, the young workers are a generation that demands more engagement and wants to be involved in its workplace.

> We work with CSR issues inside the factories, we work on how companies can improve the working environment for their employees, for example we have a project with working parents where we provide training for the managers on how they should support the parents by providing parents to be able to work shorter days, to be able to be home with their child if they get sick[…] A lot of the parents are migrant workers in distant cities were the factories are, and therefore separated from the children a longer time. We are trying to train the managers to support working parents and provide resources to assist the wellbeing of families. We have also been working with young workers in the factories. The young workers live in the factories, work together there and it is a big and messy environment with nothing around for them to do. This creates frustration. The young workers also want to be involved in the workplace, which often is new for traditional managers. So we have trainings on how these two generations, managers and young workers can communicate and how the

workers can be involved in the decision-making. The training can create a good environment for the young workers such as having social activities like cinema club, internet access in the factories. It can lead to a better working environment, not as many people that quit their jobs, which result in a lower employee turnover, workers well-being could lead to better production as they are engaged and not so many wrongs with the products. It benefits the company as well as the workers (Interviewee D, 18 November 2013).

One program we have is that we conduct a work-through in the factory, we follow up the process of one producer's product, from the beginning to the end, each step of the process so workers and managers go together to see, each step, where is the areas for improvement and if the joined identify the areas that need to be improved and should then brainstorm how this can be solved by the own staffs. For example if you are responsible for conduct 5s, the production area A, she or he should be responsible for this task and he/she can involve the worker in this area to work together in this task. This whole process is about that each one can bring more people into the process, and that in the end everyone in the factory can be a part of this process, to share the common goal and then learn the same approach, and help each other. It's a process build on ownership, through better sharing information and better problems solving process, where everyone get more involved in business. That's one of our methodologies (Interviewee H, 25 November 2013).

As understood most of the interviewees methods involves working with managers, this due to that the interviewees believe that trainings are more efficient when applied to managers precisely because they possess the power to make a change. Manufacture managers, for example, are trained as they can have enough influence to improve CSR in their company.

Managers receive training, as they are the ones that can influence, then when back at their respective localities they should start training the workers based upon what they have been taught, it consists of training the trainer (Interviewee A, 5 November 2013).

We find management training important where we provide trainee to the top managers and as well owners, because they are the people that are capable to promote it forward (Interviewee B, 6 November 2013).

The interviewees' idea with raising awareness and trainings could be seen as creating learning processes to develop CSR. When related to organization theory, these learning processes could stimulate organizations to become learning systems. Indeed, according to Schön and Argyris (1978) organizations that use double-loop learning, which is a system that helps to determine appropriate behaviors so as to generate learning loops that augment knowledge and

awareness, can modify the organizations and render them more self-reflective. The interviewees' attempts to implement CSR strategies, such as training programs could be seen as initiatives leading to double-loop learning. As a matter of fact, these trainings aim at changing mindsets and increasing interactions between people, which create new ways of learning and behaving for companies. By doing so, the interviewees' actions towards CSR implementation could be perceived as a form of double loop-learning, since they strive to improve the self-reflectiveness of companies through raising awareness, changing mindsets, and creating a learning environment. The focus on management training, for example, is justified by the fact that the interviewees believe that managers possess the capacity to enact changes in companies. Therefore, any change in the managers' learning patterns can lead to a modification of the governing variables, which are factors that frame organizations (Schön & Argyris, 1978). For instance, the mentioned trainings can help managers to develop opportunities that improve the working environment and empower the employees. Henceforth, the methods utilized by the interviewees could be perceived as similar to empowerment as well, which could be seen as a dimension of organizational learning, as it focuses on how organizations are working to empower the employees.

Empowerment can be defined as a process that builds an understanding of the relationship between people and develop different ways of working together, where aspects such as changing mindset, communication, engagement and collaboration becomes vital (Scott & Jaffe, 1991). This could be recognized in the trainings as the interviewees are working with encouraging and teaching companies to deal with their CSR issues, and, thereby creating a better working environment. For example, one of the representatives from a company explains how the company undertakes activities to improve the health conditions of its employees by offering training about health and safety issues. Another example is the training with the working parents and young workers that is related to labor right issues, like their long working hours and poor living conditions, as the training provides ways of respecting and considering the treatment and conditions of the workers.

5.1.3. Partnerships and collaborations

In order to get a picture of business partnerships and collaborations in the work of CSR the interviewees were asked to describe what the role and involvement of social workers and NGOs in the process of CSR could be. Moreover, all of the interviewees agreed that NGOs

could have a role in the development of CSR in China. The ones that did not work with NGOs were representatives from companies and the consulate; they also agreed that it could be beneficial to do so.

> Partnerships with NGOs can be beneficial since there are situations where NGOs may be in places where companies are not, such as in the factories together with the workers (Interviewee F, 23 November 2013).

This statement implies that if companies collaborate with NGOs, they would benefit from it, in particular as a way to implement CSR-practices. Some interviewees also mentioned that they are collaborating with local NGOs and, in some situations, with social workers. It could be understood that these interviewees perceive interactions with NGOs and social workers as part of their strategies to implement CSR. It was implied that they were working together with local practitioners such as Chinese NGOs and social workers when they were applying training programs in the factories. Even the representatives that were from NGOs themselves, talked about collaboration with local NGOs. The representatives coming from social enterprises and NGOs outlined the importance of partnering with local practitioners, like Chinese NGOs and, in some situations, social workers.

One representative from an international NGO gives examples of strategies they use in order to get companies to collaborate with local NGOs. The interviewee represents a nonprofit business association that is working to promote collaboration among companies and their stakeholders. For this to happen, the international NGO incites local NGOs to reach the stakeholders by empowering the workers, and by spreading awareness.

> We are providing trainings to companies on various aspects of how to partner with NGOs, and to NGOs on how to partner with companies [...] We have a factory-based health program to empower women. We sell the idea to a company, and then introduce a suitable NGO that they collaborate with, to link the factories and local NGOs. We train the local NGOS about women's health such as family planning, nutrition, diseases and other topics that are related to the workplace location and then the NGO should go to the factories and educate some women in the program about health awareness and the idea is that these women should then educate the other women at the factories. So that we are stepp (Interviewee I, 5 December 2013).

Other interviewees from a national NGO and UN agency describe that they also involve local NGOs in their programs when implementing CSR-strategies:

> We involve partnership with local NGOs and work together. Now for example, we have a project about sexual harassments, to see what the attitudes in the factories are. The local NGOs do research and ask questions and interview and we will launch a report. We work as the coordinator between the factories and the local NGOs (Interviewee B, 6 November 2013).

There is a positive character outlined of partnership with NGOs in CSR-practices, and in particular the value of the latter in specific strategic situations where it can bring up resources that a company has not access to. For instance, NGOs are granted authorization to work on the field, to be able to link special bounds with the workers, and to witness the manufacturing process in action. Their ability to work on the field is an advantage at hand for involvement progress, which companies could benefit from. As illustrated above some of the interviewees described that they have partnered with local NGOs when helping companies to implement CSR-strategies. The common partnership illustrated was that the interviewees guide the local NGOs about how to work in the factories, with the workers, and provide them with tools to design in action or to do surveys.

One representative from a social enterprise describes strategies involving NGOs and also social workers when they are developing CSR-strategies for companies. The interviewee expressed that social workers as well as NGOs have lately got an increased role in the CSR-field and that these groups go hand-in-hand when working with CSR. Companies interested in social enterprises' services get help from them when they offer projects on CSR and training programs. In these projects, they collaborate with local NGOs as well as social workers. An example is that a social enterprise is developing a project where it will train social workers and local NGOs on child labor and local working conditions issues, so that these local practitioners can work with these issues in Chinese factories. This initiative has been suggested by multinational companies, as a part of their CSR work. Interviewee D describes that companies do it because they see a need for social support and social safety.

> There are companies that have started to recognize a gap somewhere in their practice work of CSR in the factories. They need people that can be in place in the factories to provide support to the workers, and there comes social workers role, to work with these matters and also NGOs. We have tried to pull in the

social workers at these areas since it is demanded from companies. Their role is working with counseling, communication skills and providing life skills for the workers about adaptation and integration, training in these matters as well as various social activities and not the hard business stuff as labor laws and minimum salary but more the softer matters. Social workers are involved when working with integrating the workers view with the factory management, and how to talk with each other[…]We design the projects and offer plans on implementing CSR, but then we often need someone else who do the actual project. This is where a partnership with NGOs comes in (Interviewee D, 18 November 2013).

Interviewee F expressed the importance of the role of social workers in the CSR-field. The social workers role is described as practical and being increasingly recognized.

The role of social workers in this case of CSR may be that they are in place to see how it has been followed up, to be there as support and advice to the workers, to act as social agents. In China, there is really no national safety net. China sees thus the need to train more social workers. They can have an important role and make much use of the CSR work, it is becoming increasingly known (Interviewee F, 23 November 2013).

The above statements about social workers involvement could identify that there is a need for social workers in CSR-field. Although most of the interviewees were not acquainted with the role of social workers in CSR, one of the interviewees argued that social workers should be part of the CSR work.

My understanding is that social workers should not only be on practice, they must be leading the way to design the project, with their skills and knowledge[…]Social workers should be hired by the companies to teach social work and also consulate how companies should be working with social work. Social workers have special knowledge skills to bring in companies and contribute to CSR. What we need to do is to get people to understand what social work is about, what social workers can do and how they can be useful for the companies. Then the business will understand what social work really can do for them. Most of the people haven't come to this understanding. I see CSR and social work as a pair, they go together [...]Social workers need to get themselves involved in the work of CSR, however they need more business knowledge to understand the problem of management and how they can apply their skills into companies. Another challenge is that social workers themselves do not have these senses because it is not in their education, so it is a new area for them as well. They need to bring up their roles and show how they can contribute to CSR. That is what I am telling my students, to teach them to see how they can contribute to CSR, design CSR projects and bring their ideas[…]Also I bring the students to the company to share with the students

about CSR and companies about social workers role (Interviewee G, 25 November 2013).

Interviewee G states the role of social workers as important within CSR work and believes that they could contribute to the field of CSR. However, in order for social workers to successfully work with CSR they need to gain a greater understanding of business. Further, the interviewee describes that social workers need to bring up their own professionalism in the CSR-field and show their ideas. The interviewee is working with encouraging social workers about their professionalism and underlines their skills and knowledge. The interviewee teaches social workers students about being aware of their skills and developing their skills for CSR-projects. The interviewee also arranges meetings where social workers and companies meet so as to involve social workers in CSR activities. These could be seen as strategies used to develop CSR and help companies to find ways of how to collaborate and work with implementing CSR in their business.

The interviewees described partnerships with NGOs as positive when it comes to working on CSR. Indeed, NGOs could have access to much more resources than the companies, and be closer to some kinds of stakeholders, such as the employees, therefore collaboration would most likely be beneficial. Some of the interviewees illustrated that they involve local NGOs when helping companies to implement CSR. This could be seen as part of their methods and strategies to successfully develop CSR implementation, especially since the local NGOs could do surveys or could help by being present in the factories. Also, in some situations the social workers' involvement in CSR is recognized. However, when partnering NGOs and companies face challenges. First, NGOs lack of knowledge of the business world and of resources in order to run their actions. Second, when partnering with companies, NGOs sometimes report the defaults of the company instead of working on improving the situation. Third, companies often use NGOs only for the positive brand image that they bring along and disdain their abilities. Even some of the interviewees describe that sometimes collaboration with local NGOs can be difficult since NGOs sometimes only judge and criticize instead of helping companies how to do. Representatives from the social enterprise express the following;

> When we work with NGOs, we select the NGOs we believe have a profile that is consistent with our values, those who are working to find solutions and not to judge or criticize (Interviewee D, 18 November 2013).

One of the interviews from a national NGO expresses that it is important to see where there are issues and report it, however there are also needs for commitment otherwise cooperation is void.

> We have had bad partnerships with NGOs before when we have been working in different provinces. A lot of NGOs are working for finding black points in the factories to report about and publish. That is not our aim, we want to work with how we can actually help factories to improve. In the partnerships with NGOs we are now choosing our collaborator selectively, so we know that the NGOs really share the same goal and aim as our organization[…] The NGOs we have worked with are reporting about issues in the textile industry for example but it's kind of a pushing power in our industry, they report about fact, and I think we need that too, but it's in a good way because then we can also collaborate with each other on how to help companies to improve these issues (Interviewee B, 6 November 2013).

Another representative from an international NGO argues that NGOs need to review their roles so that when they partner with companies, they do it with the willingness to improve things. This interviewee asserts that NGOs must take into account the internal state of the organization they are partnering with, rather than pointing out defaults without having an internal perspective, however, the interviewee also states that NGOs must beware of being used by companies for their brand value.

> We as NGOs need to see what our role is and also add value to our roles, so that we partner with business for CSR benefits, and not for the companies branding. One challenge with partnership with NGOs is when they do business, they talk about how things should be done when they do not have the knowledge or ability of the business [….] Many NGOs have an outside perspective, which means they see the situation and think that the situation must change without looking into the context, so they judge without knowing the alternatives. To be successful, NGOs need to know and be clear about their role, decide that if they want to perform a service for a company then the role is not to point out where there is a lack but instead to work with solutions and talk to those it affects (Interviewee F, 23 November 2013).

Moreover, all the interviewees mentioned that partnerships with NGOs could be beneficial for companies. Some interviewees also mentioned that they collaborate with other NGOs, most of them referring to local ones. It could be understood that, in their methods and strategies, the interviewees involve local practitioners, such as local NGOs and social workers. When referring to this, it seems that the role of local NGOs is to work on the field by using a hands-

on approach. The social actors are helping companies to implement CSR, and in their work they involve local practitioners as well,which consists of a successful partnership between these three entities, and can lead to demonstrate the value of partnerships to companies. However, the interviewees mention some challenges regarding partnerships between NGOs and business. They state that it could be because lots of NGOs have a lack of knowledge on how to work with CSR. Even though, it is not clearly stipulated in the interviews, it could be interpreted that local NGOs sometimes lack this knowledge, which could result in unsuccessful partnerships. Another aspect that two of the interviewees from international NGOs mentioned is that companies have a lack of trust in the NGOs:

> I believe NGOs can have a huge part in the CSR work, and they want to as well. Companies need to let them in. There is a paradox, companies think NGOs are too small to play a big role but at the same time they think it is too much to support them and help their foundations in capacity building so they can grow bigger […] In China there are challenges for partnership with NGOs because companies don't have trust for NGOs and their work (Interviewee I, 5 December 2013).

As presented earlier, partnerships between local NGOs and companies have a lot of benefits. Indeed, the interviewees, by inducing local NGOs and companies to partner together, contribute to improve CSR practices. One of the benefits of these partnerships is that NGOs, when collaborating with companies, bring different perspectives, experiences, skills, and ways of doing to companies. Therefore, they improve the CSR work in companies and can lead them to develop creative ways of working. This could be connected to the idea, presented in organization learning theory, that a shift from a traditional learning perspective to a creative learning perspective is beneficial for organizations (Schön & Argyris, 1978). In this case, companies, when partnering with NGOs, have the possibility to explore new ways of doing and to carry out creative actions. Besides, it could be understood that the interviewees, by encouraging partnerships between local actors, such as local NGOs and social workers, and companies, have the purpose to create learning schemes that, consequently, inspire people in companies to become more reflective and more involved in self-learning, so as to create a healthy environment for change. Thus, the interviewees' ways of involving local actors and creating learning could be seen as related to action research methods, since action research is a participatory process that aims at involving participants to work together in order to change the initial situation,

in that way it generates the knowledge that is necessary, and the result can then actually be put into work (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; McNiff & Whitehead, 2001). Even though, partnerships come along with many benefits, they are, however, bringing some issues as well. For example, these issues can be that local NGOs lack knowledge or don't share the same vision than companies. Moreover, local NGOs can sometimes keep an outside perspective and criticize companies without knowing the internal state of affairs, whereas companies can try to use NGOs for the value they add in terms of brand image. Therefore, collaborations between local actors and companies are often eventful. This idea has already been treated in previous research, according to Jamali and Mirshak (2007), partnerships can be used to enhance images of organizations instead of aiming at improving CSR work. They argue that NGOs and companies should be more responsible and committed, and should understand the true opportunity of partnering together. In order to do so, Jamali and Mirshak (2007), recommend to both NGOs and companies to set up common goals and to strive for shared vision.

5.2. Implementation challenges

5.2.1. Motives for CSR initiatives

When asked for the reason that CSR is increasingly developing in China, the interviewees declare that there are demands, and pressures from different actors such as media, consumers, workers, the Chinese government and NGOs. These demands and pressures could be one of the reasons for which companies engage in CSR. As one of the interviewee illustrates;

> CSR has increased in China because a lot of media, organization, government are talking about these issues. CSR is important to the whole society, so it means that CSR got attention from the whole society (Interviewee B, 6 November 2013).

> The companies contact us because they want to prove their performance, to work with CSR, because it is demanded from customers, companies and NGOs. CSR is more important in China because attention from foreigners and also media has been given about scandals on safety and working conditions and so on since 2005 (Interviewee B, 6 November 2013).

As the interviewee asserts, the pressures and demands coming from different institutions affect companies in their perception, commitment, and implementation of CSR. On the one hand, some companies could recognize the imminent importance of engaging in CSR activities after receiving demands. Therefore, companies could genuinely start the CSR process and strive for the implementation of successful CSR practices; this would consist of a commitment that could benefit the social actors' strategies and methods, as they aim at improving CSR practices within organizations. On the other hand, other companies could perceive such demands as pure pressures and, to an extent, as obligations to engage in CSR. Thus, they are more likely to enter the CSR process for political reasons rather than for its benefits.

> There is a risk that companies are "making" CSR instead of taking basic responsibility. There are companies using CSR as a kind of alibi, showing that taking CSR commitment and think it is enough instead of actually focusing on real CSR into the core business. For example they give certain trainings, organize a Christmas party but not sure that the working conditions are good or which kind of training is needed (Interviewee F, 23 November 2013).

Along with the idea that companies can start off the CSR process for political reasons, interviewee F experienced that companies sometimes use CSR in order to improve their brand image but have no interest whatsoever in real CSR practices. This way of doing from companies could be identified as "window-dressing", a process in which companies hope to gain legitimacy and to communicate about their CSR initiatives without truly caring about CSR issues.

> Much of the CSR that exists today in China is very only talk, but lack practice. Companies talk about responsibility, but it is very marketing orientated. Not about how to work with it in practice. CSR should be in the business as their foundation, not as a work with charity. I believe that realization does not exist in China yet (Interviewee A, 5 November 2013).

Correspondingly, interviewee A's statement could be understood as companies often "talk the talk" instead of "walking the talk". Indeed, they mainly focus on the marketing impact of CSR, in particular through its communication. In this regard, companies are likely to make donations to charity, whereas their internal structure remain unchanged.

These ideas could be relevant when connected to the new institutional perspective, which is a part of organization theory. As mentioned by Scott (2001), organizations are bound to take into consideration external pressures from different institutions and to adapt to their expectations. This could be related to the fact that companies are receiving pressures and demands from their environment regarding Corporate Social Responsibility. Indeed, some of the interviewees claimed that CSR has increased because of external pressures directed towards companies, therefore it could be interpreted that institutional pressure affects companies concerning CSR. From the analysis above, it could be identified that companies, in order to answer these demands, behave in two different ways. On the one hand, external pressures and demands could have the effect to motivate companies to engage in CSR in a genuine way. Thus, companies would respond to the external actors' expectations by improving their CSR initiatives, strengthening their CSR policies, and developing authentic CSR strategies. This behavior could be viewed as beneficial as it would likely improve the way CSR is implemented in companies. On the other hand, it could be understood that companies have no choice but to adapt. According to Meyer and Rowan (1977), external pressure puts demands on how organizations should behave, and, thereby, organizations adapt so as to gain legitimacy, which is assumed to be vital for their survival. In the same way, it could be considered that CSR pressures and demands must be answered by companies for the sake of their survival. In this situation, some companies are likely to engage in the CSR process solely for gaining legitimacy. Thence, these companies' undertakings towards CSR could probably be aiming at improving their brand image rather than improving CSR. As a result, some companies claiming to be socially responsible may, in truth, have weak CSR structures. This could relate to the idea of Li Wen (2010) that CSR initiatives can be a kind of "window dressing" and that some companies use CSR to improve their image. To consider this possibility may help to understand why some interviewees find it hard to implement CSR practices.

5.2.2. Implementation in practice

The first challenge of implementation of CSR in practice is related to the idea that companies may not have the right purpose in engaging in CSR and do it in order to gain legitimacy and brand equity. This phenomenon can lead companies to commit poorly to CSR practices. Moreover, the interviewees recognized a challenge in the fact that companies can be reluctant to put their CSR-strategies into practice. They argued that a lack of knowledge and

understanding of CSR commitments can bring up issues in the implementation process.

> Many people don't have enough knowledge about CSR and why CSR is important. A lot of people think of CSR as branding. It's not difficult working with CSR, there are lots of ways, but the awareness is not strong enough (Interviewee H, 25 November 2013).

A lack of knowledge and a misconception of CSR are likely to lead to weak actions towards CSR implementation. As interviewee H claims CSR is unfairly interpreted as a form of branding, while its true purpose is only a little, if not at all, related to branding. Therefore, companies lacking knowledge of CSR often derive to inappropriate applications of CSR and unfortunately miss the point of this tool for the social welfare of their organization.

> We would like to follow up after training but it depends on the companies, if they are willing to invest time and money too. It is if companies want, as we go in and follow up. Usually it's a quick fix, come in and provides the training and then it's ready and done. This is general, which means that it's not long-term (Interviewee D, 18 November 2013).

In accordance with the ideas expressed earlier, CSR applications are sometimes not carried out in practical ways, and even when they are it happens that they only consist of a "quick fix". Interviewee D states the transient nature of the social actors' work, which explains that companies are using CSR to fix some situations without a long-term vision.

When discussing the implementation challenges of CSR - practices some of the interviewees were referring to the Chinese government and the lack of sufficient support from the government. Interviewees expressed that there is a need for more support from the government in form of stronger laws and clearer policies in order for CSR to be implemented. There is recognition that CSR should be volunteered and connected to the organization itself among the interviewees, however several of the social actors expressed there is a need for external pressure in order for companies to commit and implement CSR-practices. In particular, pressure from the Chinese government was recognized to be strong and powerful in order for companies to adapt to CSR principles, hence it is necessary for the Chinese government to act and put pressure to get companies involved in the CSR work.

> In China the government is the boss of everything. If the government would release a policy or some kind of requirement on CSR there would be a lot of reactions from the companies, but if they don't say anything about that, nothing will happen. Ideally companies should do CSR volunteering so that they feel like they want to do it, but right now it's an order from the government, like an outside pressure because in China the companies have an individual view, they don't care about anything expect high profit. So it's hard to push the drive from their aspect (Interviewee E, 22 November 2013).

From the results, it could be interpreted that currently there is not enough pressure from the government, and therefore CSR strategies are not successfully implemented, as the institutional perspective emphasizes that exerted pressure could foster the change. On the contrary, there are interviewees assuming that pressure of policy from governments will make no difference. Instead, in order for CSR-practices to be truly implemented, it needs to take place within organizations at first.

> I do not believe that CSR can come from the state or government, it must come from the companies themselves. When it comes to social safety net, health insurance and such matters, it is the state's responsibility, but when it comes to CSR, it is business. What should a policy or regulations about CSR make for difference, without any interest from business (Interviewee F, 23 November 2013).

The interviewees claim that pressure from the government will not drive companies to commit to CSR-principles, indeed it needs to be a motivation within companies. Here the assumption is that external pressure will not bring change, and could be understood in line with Meyer and Rowan (1977), as a way to only maintain social acceptance.

As discussed earlier, social actors face different challenges when encouraging companies to implement CSR. Firstly, as some interviewees pointed out, a lack of knowledge and resources can lead companies to misunderstand the concept of CSR, and look for short-term solutions, whereas CSR is a process that is most efficient on the long run. This approach, which essentially consists of using "quick fixes" to address CSR, is less efficient and can cause companies to miss out some significant opportunities. It could be linked to the concept of "single-loop learning" described by Argyris and Schön (1978), which explains that some organizations tend to solve issues by introducing solutions without reflecting upon the cause of the problem, most of the time these organizations have a weak or inexistent self-learning system. Secondly, some of the interviewees claimed that another

reason that could justify companies' behavior towards CSR implementation could be that the Chinese government is not enough involved in the matter. They argue that the Chinese government does not offer enough support, does not urge companies to engage in CSR, and does not provide codifications, laws, and regulations. On the contrary, other interviewees expressed that external drivers' implication is not the real issue. Instead, as interviewee D suggested, true attempts to implement CSR can only emerge inside companies.Therefore, it could be assumed that if CSR implementation relies upon external pressures, it could not be really implemented as the initiative would not come from companies, rather companies would be obligated to adapt to these demands in order to gain legitimacy and social acceptance, which, according to Meyer and Rowan (1977) are necessary for their survival. By doing so, there may be a risk that companies seek to be socially accepted without truly implementing CSR.

5.3. Social actors as drivers

The social actors coming from different fields are all focusing on implementing strategies to deal with issues regarding companies' behavior and responsibility. The representatives from social enterprises, the consulate and NGOs described that companies are hiring their services in order to get help with CSR-practices. These social actors provide trainings and programs most often in the factories, but they are also arranging seminars and workshops where companies are invited in order to initiate encourage and raise the awareness of companies' Corporate Social Responsibility. The representative from the global company described strategies that the company is using to implement CSR, such as providing trainings for the managers and employees, and organizing a mechanic training where education is provided to young workers. A representative from the academia, Interviewee G, is also in this paper referred to as a social actor, as the interviewee is working with educating social workers students in CSR and raising their roles and involvement with companies in order to develop successful CSR-strategies.

The social actors' roles and involvement towards CSR work can be understood through their working approaches. Although the interviewees are representing different organizations and have different professions, all of them emphasize the social function and social value of CSR via their working methods and interpretations of CSR. Their roles and involvement in CSR could be understood as drivers that promote knowledge, initiatives and capacities on how

companies should act in socially responsible ways. In this regard, they outline the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility as a process that takes place within the organization, to improve the organization itself along with its stakeholders, as a long-run process that requires involvement from every part of the organization. None of the interviewees illustrate any relation between CSR and charity or donations, instead the human capital is underlined.

The following examples illustrate the significance of CSR:

> There is no standard for what CSR is, different companies have different production, location and directions but the idea is that it should be an improvement for the companies work with employees and the work should be fairly done (Interviewee J, 6 December 2013).

> We think you should invest in your staff and work environment instead of just giving money to charity. It is our intention with CSR. Ensure that working conditions improve (Interviewee D, 18 November 2013).

In this context, social actors play multiple roles towards CSR in China. In the first place, social actors are communicators as they are the pillars of awareness raising. As it has been discussed previously, social actors raise awareness of CSR in companies through different tools, like seminars for example. They endorse the role of communicators by explaining, presenting, and demonstrating CSR along with its implications and requirements, so as companies understand its true meaning. Also, social actors aim at improving CSR comprehension by introducing new ways of thinking in companies, namely by forming managers and employees to recognize their responsibilities and rights towards social issues. By doing so, social actors suggest alternative ways of working to companies.

For example, the representative of a company provides insight about the company's role in CSR, this interviewee expresses the cruciality to take into consideration human value in the company's daily operations and the necessity for changing mindsets in companies:

> One example is working a lot with human value, that everyone is equal. We work with values in the daily work, what is right and wrong and human dignity. It is important that managers have this mindset in order to bring it to the employees (Interviewee A, 5 November 2013).

In the second place, social actors are initiators of new practices and methods within companies. Indeed, they offer services to companies in order to train, form, and educate managers and employees to work with CSR. These methods, which can be training programs or partnerships for instance, allow managers and employees to gain skills and capacities, and to acquire a greater understanding of CSR practices. Consequently, companies become able to implement CSR strategies on their own terms, while keeping a complete picture of CSR and being able to respect its true nature.

This particular point has a great importance in order to fully understand the role of social actors in this process. Indeed, according to the interviewees, even though social actors are working closely with companies, their role is no to implement CSR instead of companies, but to provide help, advices, and guidance throughout the CSR process.

The following interview consists of a good example of the way social actors perceive their work with companies:

> We provide trainings but it relies on them own, we are not there at the factories every day, so therefore it relies on them. We help them to set up the system so that when we go they can still run and continue it. That's the way to do it long term, to teach them to do it themselves (Interviewee H, 25 November 2013).

Furthermore, social actors are not investigators or judges of CSR practices within companies. On the contrary, they pinpoint the fact that they work in collaboration with China and its companies, and that they should provide help and solutions to every company interested in CSR. The two following examples express the idea that social actors should offer help and support to every company willing to engage in CSR, and outline the spirit of collaboration of social actors towards China:

> We don't control and judge anyone. We work with all who want to change, even if companies have had 200 children in the factory, we don't think they are bad companies, we work with them and provide help and solutions and believe they have potential to change (Interviewee D, 18 November 2013).

> Our role is not to go in and be CSR police in China, instead we have a common interest with China (Interviewee C, 7 November 2013).

As previously stated, social actors have different roles in the CSR process. Firstly, they are communicators as they raise awareness and change mindsets of people. In this context, social actors answer the need expressed by Senge (1994) that is, organizations need to be aware of their impact and influence on society. Also, it addresses Hatch's (2006) idea that learning should stimulate companies to integrate new ideas and practices in their operations. Secondly, social actors are initiators as they help companies to introduce new practices and methods in their operations. These services offer companies the possibility to try out different approaches that look nothing like their traditional ways of doing. In particular, since the working approaches of the social actors are involving different actors, such as NGOs, social workers, and local practitioners, and are composed of methods that are seeking to increase self-reflectiveness and self-learning schemes. By doing so, the methods employed by social actors could be related to the concept of "double-loop learning" presented by Schön and Argyris (1978), the idea of empowerment of Scott and Jaffe (1991), and the description of action research of Greenwood and Levin (2007), and McNiff and Whitehead (2001). Thirdly, it seems important to stipulate that social actors are neither investigators nor judges. As a matter of fact, the interviewees do not describe their work as supposed to criticize the state of CSR in companies, but, on the contrary, as supposed to help every company willing to engage in CSR.

6. Discussion

The aspects to be studied in this thesis are the social actors' involvement in the CSR-field in China, through their roles, the tools they use, the collaborations they initiate, and the challenges they face. By focusing on such elements, a better understanding is created for how social actors can get companies to integrate social considerations into business strategies. All the interviewees were involved in supporting, developing and communicating CSR actions.

The work of social actors, who are committed to improve CSR implementation in China through encouraging organizations to engage in CSR-practices, could be related to organizational learning, more precisely to the concept of "double-loop learning" as it involves new ways of operating for companies (Schön & Argyris, 1978). Further on, the interviewees, by providing education and trainings, assist organizations to successfully integrate Corporate Social Responsibility. In order to do so, methods such as raising knowledge about CSR, learning through training programs and, providing frameworks for partnerships should be

conducted. The findings opened up for an analysis that displayed the social actors' strategies and methods, and could be seen as connected to empowerment and action research approaches. The strategies used, aim at providing managers as well as employees with increased self-development, continuous growth and acquisitions of new skills. The parallels to empowerment and action research could be seen as new concepts to integrate in the work of Corporate Social Responsibility. Another strategy that could be identified was the involvement of local actors, such as local NGOs and social workers, as they could play an advocacy role on the field and exert their special influences to improve CSR performances in China. Furthermore, different challenges regarding CSR implementation in China could be identified. The impact of institutional pressure on organizations has been analyzed in order to understand the challenges of implementing CSR-practices. First, companies can lack knowledge and understanding of the CSR concept. Second, companies can engage in CSR for "window dressing". Third, the Chinese government doesn't offer a strong support towards companies engaging in CSR in China.

Even though, different reasons addressing the implementation challenges could be identified, the persistent nature of these challenges remains blur. Li-Wen (2010) discusses whether CSR initiatives are motivated by real purposes or are simply "window dressing" and concludes that "window dressing" cannot be solely accounted for the difficulties of implementation of CSR in China, instead Li-Wen highlights the fact that, at this stage, CSR initiatives may rest more on awareness raising and course-defining than in implementation. To discuss this idea in this thesis could also be relevant, as implementing CSR was recognized as one of the major challenges the social actors' face. As illustrated from the interviews, social actors claim that a need for CSR knowledge exists. Also, they are working with providing this, as CSR is now at stage of raising awareness, in order to then be able to complete implementation. In this regard, the social actors' involvement in CSR initiatives and strategies may be a step towards the establishment of CSR in China.

Also, this thesis has attempted to identify the roles of the social actors in CSR. From the results, it could be assumed that the social actors are, as a main role, drivers of CSR in China. Then, according to the social actors' methods, strategies, and ways of doing, this role of driver has been divided in different elements. Two main ideas emerged that social actors act as communicators by raising awareness of CSR and changing mindsets, and as initiators by involving different participants in the CSR process and by helping companies to introduce

new ways of doing and thinking in their operations, which, consequently, prepare companies to organizational change.

Thence, this thesis expresses the view that CSR is not a concept exclusive to business, in fact it could be seen as highly relevant to the social field, in particular since CSR is a concept of social concern in the first place. Furthermore, there is a wide agreement that business should play a significant role in working with CSR principles, by doing so, it should integrate social actors in order to improve the implementation of CSR-strategies. However, research about social actors involvement in implementation and construction of CSR-strategies seem to be scarce. Therefore, this could be a suggestion for further research. Also, this study does not address social workers' views and knowledge regarding their involvement in the CSR-work, this could also be an interesting research aspect to further develop. Lastly, the results have indicated that one of the partnership between social workers and a company was a requirement of a multinational corporation, thus it would consist of another path of investigation to analyze what causes this multinational corporation to require social workers on the field.

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Appendix – Interview guide

Interview guide

Initiatory:

1. How do you define the CSR concept?

2. How long have you worked with CSR?

3. What is your reason for working with CSR? (Who are your stakeholders when it comes to CSR? (communities, NGOs, governments, suppliers, employees)

4. Why do you think CSR has become increasingly important in the recent years? On who's initiative?

5. What do you want to accomplish when it comes to CSR in China? Why is CSR important in China?

6. Which stakeholders would you say are the most influential when developing CSR in China?

CSR areas:

7. What are your main focus areas within CSR? (Social, environmental, ethical or others?) How come these areas are your primary focus?

8. Could you describe how you have worked with CSR in China over the years?

9. In what way do you think CSR could improve the social development in China?

10. Do you believe that foreign companies have a chance to influence and improve the social conditions in China? How can companies contribute to such improvements? (For example through Codes of Conduct? Are there other methods?) Do you see example of companies following certain models or methods?

11. In what way could your work affect the social development in China?

Development and evaluation

12. How do you gain understanding/knowledge/insight of the issues and problems faced by the factory, regarding CSR principles?

13. How do you follow up and measure your CSR work?

14. At what levels in the supply chain do you work with regarding CSR, direct with the suppliers, the companies, through a third part?

Methods and implement

15. Do you have specific methods to achieve your CSR goals? Can you describe them? Do you work with the same CSR method in China and globally?

16. Do you provide trainings on CSR for your suppliers? Can you describe them?

17. Do you work with a third part in the work regarding training and implementing CSR? Who? How is the training implemented?

18. What opportunities do you see in involving partners in the work? Which partners?

19. How do you see NGOs become involved in partnership and cooperate regarding CSR?

20. What do you think cooperation with NGOs could contribute? What would you say their roles are?

21. How do you see social work as a part in CSR?

22. More and more companies hire social workers to work with CSR. Is this something you have done? If yes, how? What are their roles? The challenges and most common issues?) If no, is this a model you heard about? Considered to use?

23. What do you think the potential role of social workers in the work of CSR could be?

Challenges:

24. What kind of challenges have you faced in implementing CSR-strategies in China? Do you have solutions for these? How do you work with these?

25. Which issues have you tried to deal with but not seen results of? Why, what are the main obstacles for achieving results?

26. Are there norms/values in China that affects the way you work with CSR? Created barriers?

27. What risks do you see with not working with CSR?

28. What challenges do you see in your CSR work in the future?

29. Do you think working with partnership as NGOs or social organization could be a way to deal with the difficulties in implementing CSR in China?

30. Do you see any difficulties in working with a third partner?

31. Will you change your CSR work in the future? (Profiles? adapt to markets? teams? Partnership?)