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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Corporate responsibility (CR) can only be achieved through the actions of the company's employees, and thus the principles of the company need to be communicated clearly to the personnel. Multinational companies may need to tailor their internal communication to fit the needs of different cultural audiences. The purpose of the research is to study *how companies implement corporate responsibility through internal communication on a global scale*. The purpose is further divided into the following sub objectives:

- How is the internal communication on corporate responsibility organised by the company internationally?
- How do companies communicate on responsibility issues with their employees?
- What kind of challenges and best practices can be identified in the process?

The research was conducted as a qualitative case study by interviewing two consultants and six group-level representatives of Finnish multinationals on their processes and practices. The findings suggest that internal communication on responsibility issues is mainly locally produced. Group-level communication relies mostly on electronic channels and focuses on the strategy and main principles related to CR, whereas locally communication is more face-to-face, as managers are important in bringing the guidelines to a practical level. The commitment of executive management is not generally specified, and formal channels for employee feedback on responsibility issues are not common. When it comes to tailoring communications to different cultural needs, keeping the message consistent is a priority. As much of the communication is in local hands, it is created for local needs from the beginning and no tailoring is needed. In most cases group-level communication is translated to the company's main languages only.

The study indicates that even though local subsidiaries can communicate quite freely, the message remains consistent and coordination from the headquarters seems sufficient. However, companies could benefit from more formal structures that support sharing ideas, experiences and practices among subsidiaries, and also help consider the cultural diversity already in the initial group-level communication. Electronic channels have become mainstream, but face-to-face communication is still highly valued, and printed material is starting to gain new respect. Executive commitment to CR does not seem explicit, even though literature highlights the importance of communication from top management. Especially in hierarchic cultures companies could more actively solicit feedback on responsibility issues from employees. Corporate responsibility in the core of the business facilitates the implementation process. The main challenge of global CR has to do with cultural differences; even with a shared language, meanings are not necessarily shared.

Key words	corporate responsibility, multinational corporations, international communication, internal communication, personnel training
Further information	

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Tiivistelmä

Yritysten vastuullisuus toteutuu vain sen työntekijöiden toiminnan kautta, minkä vuoksi yrityksen toimintaperiaatteet tulee viestiä henkilöstölle selkeästi. Monikansalliset yritykset saattavat joutua muokkaamaan sisäistä viestintäänsä eri kohdekulttuurien mukaan. Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää, miten yritykset toteuttavat vastuullisuuttaan kansainvälisesti sisäisen viestinnän avulla. Tavoite jakaantuu seuraaviin osatavoitteisiin:

- Miten vastuullisuuteen liittyvä sisäinen viestintä on organisoitu kansainvälisesti?
- Miten yritykset viestivät yritysvastuusta työntekijöidensä kanssa?
- Millaisia haasteita ja hyviä käytäntöjä tähän viestintään liittyy?

Tätä kvalitatiivista tutkimusta varten haastateltiin kahta alan konsulttia ja kuutta konsernitason edustajaa suomalaisista monikansallisista yrityksistä. Tulokset viittaavat siihen, että yritykset viestivät vastuuasioista sekä keskitetysti että paikallisesti. Konsernitason viestinnässä käytetään sähköisiä kanavia ja se painottuu vastuullisuuden perusperiaatteisiin ja strategiaan. Paikallistasolla viestintä on henkilökohtaisempaa, sillä esimiehillä on tärkeä rooli käytännön toimien ohjauksessa. Ylimmän johdon sitoutuminen vastuullisuuteen ei ole keskeistä viestinnässä. Henkilökunnan virallisia palautekanavia käytetään vain vähän yritysvastuuviestinnän tarpeisiin. Kun viestintää muokataan kohdekulttuureihin sopivaksi, viestin yhdenmukaisuuden tarvetta korostetaan. Koska suuri osa viestinnästä tehdään paikallisista lähtökohdista käsin, varsinaista muokkaamista ei tarvita. Konsernitason viestintä käännetään useimmiten vain yhtiön muutamalle pääkielelle.

Vaikka paikallinen viestintä on melko itsenäistä, se on kuitenkin yritysten linjan mukaista, ja näin ollen koordinointi konsernitasolta vaikuttaa riittävältä. Yritykset voisivat kuitenkin hyötyä järjestelmällisemmästä ideoiden, kokemusten ja käytäntöjen jakamisesta eri toimipisteiden välillä, ja eri kulttuurit voitaisiin ottaa huomioon yleisemmin jo konsernitason viestintää suunniteltaessa. Suuri osa viestinnästä tapahtuu sähköisiä kanavia pitkin, mutta kasvokkain tapahtuvaa viestintää arvostetaan edelleen eniten, ja toisaalta myös painetut materiaalit koetaan uudella tavalla hyödyllisiksi. Toimitusjohtajan merkitys sisäisessä vastuullisuusviestinnässä ei ole ainakaan tiedostettua, vaikka sitä aiemmissa tutkimuksissa on pidetty tärkeänä. Etenkin hierarkkisissa kulttuureissa yritykset voisivat selkeämmin pyrkiä saamaan palautetta ja ideoita vastuullisuusasioissa myös henkilökunnalta. Vastuullisuuden viestiminen ja tuominen käytännön tasolle on helpompaa, kun se on keskeinen osa yrityksen tarjoamia tuotteita tai palveluita. Suurin haaste liittyy kulttuurienvälisiin eroihin, koska edes yhteisen kielen käyttäminen ei takaa yhteistä tulkintaa vastuullisuudesta ja etiikasta.

Asiasanat	yhteiskuntavastuu, kansainväliset yritykset, kansainvälinen viestintä, sisäinen tiedotus, henkilöstökoulutus
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IMPLEMENTING CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH INTERNAL COMMUNICATION ON A GLOBAL SCALE

Master´s Thesis
in International Business

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1 INTRODUCTION

Many companies operate all around the world in countries and cultures with very different rules and expectations. This has created ethical dilemmas and companies now aim to act consistently everywhere they operate. This can only be done through implementing the same ethical guidelines to all employees, regardless of their culture and background, and this suggests a need to fit the communication to the needs of the audience.

1.1 Background of the study

Globalisation has brought countries, companies and people closer together, resulting in an increasing need to understand and consider the needs and thoughts of other, possibly very different, people. Globalisation has also made ethical issues more visible and pronounced, as the interests of different actors around the world clash, and the information regarding those clashes has a fast and long reach. From a corporate perspective, a company's actions in a distant part of the world can have a major effect on its reputation in its home country and other markets (Min-Dong 2008, 69). Thus public pressure from consumers, investors, unions, and activist groups has led to more and more multinational companies (MNCs) voluntary adopting some ethical guidelines (Lobel 2006, 57).

Several concepts have been developed to manage different ethical issues in the business environment, such as corporate governance, corporate citizenship, corporate responsibility, sustainable development, stakeholder approach and triple bottom line (Fisher & Lovell 2009; Rohweder 2004). In some form they all take into consideration the relationship between corporations and the surrounding society and the responsibilities towards different stakeholders. The European Commission uses the term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), where "companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (EC: Enterprise and Industry). In this study the previous definition is used, but with the term corporate responsibility (CR), in order not to overemphasise social responsibility.

Even though CR is not without its faults, it seems to have established a steady position in the corporate world, as a comparison of the 250 largest corporations of the world on the Fortune-list shows, that the percentage of companies reporting on sustainability issues has grown steadily from 39 % in 1999 to 69 % in 2005 (Kolk 2010, 369). To guide the companies' CR strategy there are sets of principles drawn together by international organisations such as the United Nations, OECD, European Union, International Chamber of Commerce and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, but in addition to committing to these public guidelines companies often publish their own set of codes (Fisher & Lovell 2009; Rohweder 2004). Committing to these guidelines on a global level implies the companies will act accordingly no matter where they operate, but signing a document doesn't guarantee compliance. Unfortunately, voluntary codes suffer from ineffective implementation and from lack of monitoring and incentives (Lobel 2006, 57). It truly seems, that the effective implementation and actual management of corporate responsibility is often more difficult than developing general strategies for sustainability (Epstein 2008, 19).

Mentioned also in the European Commission's definition of CSR, stakeholders are increasingly important factors to consider in business operations and in the management of corporate responsibility. Freeman (1984, 1) defined stakeholders as "a wide range of groups who can affect or are affected by the corporation". One major stakeholder group are employees, who ultimately have the main burden of implementing the corporate guidelines in the daily activities of the company (Collier & Esteban 2007, 19–20).

Without a doubt, commitment of the whole personnel is extremely important for turning a company's CR principles into action. This will also be seen by external stakeholders. Employees are often underestimated as a communication channel, even though they are critically important in enhancing a company's reputation. They are often the main contact to other stakeholders, and they are seen as a more credible information source than any official communication. (Dawkins 2004, 116.) Employees are important "brand ambassadors", ensuring the credibility and coherence of the corporate identity (Cornelissen 2008, 86). Freeman also describes employees as a "channel through which the manager reaches out to the external stakeholder" (Freeman 1984, 218). This means employees are an important means to communicate responsibility to outsiders.

However, employees shouldn't be seen as mere communicators, they are also producers and users of knowledge (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka 2010, 300). Employees are important agents in the process towards sustainability, "creating meaning in action" (Rok 2009, 464). Corporate responsibility is also important for recruiting and retaining talented employees. There are clear indications of the importance of perceived corporate social performance for possible new employees (Backhaus, Stone & Heiner 2002) and that CR can increase employee motivation (Dawkins 2004, 118).

However, Madsen and Ulhøi (2001, 59) found that many employees have limited knowledge of the content of their company's sustainability policies. To increase this knowledge, the employees can be reached through internal communication, still a fairly new and understudied concept (Welch & Jackson 2007). In this study internal communication is seen widely, using the definition by Kalla (2005, 304), who describes it as "all formal and informal communication taking place internally at all levels of an organisation." Thus, this includes for example official corporate-wide messages, training and managerial communication.

Getting thousands of employees with different backgrounds and beliefs to understand and support the same set of principles and guidelines can be challenging. In an international setting the problem is even more pronounced, as the company operates over a bigger set of cultures with a variety of employee values and interests (Watson & Weaver 2003, 79). Cross-cultural aspects can hinder the implementation of ethical codes (Helin & Sandström 2008). The ethical challenges are different in all the countries, and the employees might have differing perceptions of ethics and responsible business. As Min-Dong (2008, 69) puts it: "Each country has a distinct social structure, dominant issues, institutions and interests, shaped by its unique history and cultural tradition."

Bird and Smucker (2007, 2–3) believe that universal standards may provide guidelines for fair and equitable practices, but they should always be interpreted and applied within the local context, including for example the culture, institutions and their interrelationships, as well as the history of the area. Acting responsibly requires real reconciliation between home and host country ideals (Carroll 2004, 117). It can be a real challenge for the companies to balance between global and local strategies. They need the strategy to be consistent throughout the countries they operate in, but at the same time they want to adapt practices to local cultures. In the sustainability context, this means for example having one worldwide standard but very different local regulations and pressures. (Epstein 2008, 67.)

The issue has been noted in companies as well. In an article about eliminating corruption within the personnel, a couple of Finnish companies admit the problems. For example Kemira has translated its code of conduct to 23 languages, and they have a training program of competitive legislation for all nationalities. International reports and rankings are used to evaluate and manage the corruption risks in different countries. (Holtari 2011, 43.) This would suggest that internal communication and training regarding corporate responsibility needs to be adapted to specific needs of different cultural settings, so the employees truly understand and fulfil the principles and practices.

The process of adapting communication to different countries can be referred to as localisation. Localisation in the marketing context has been extensively studied, Schmid and Kotulla (2010, 1) count over 300 articles in the last 50 years. Also, there are many studies regarding the possible localisation of human resource or management practices (e.g. Barbosa & Cabral-Cardosa 2010; Farndale, Paauwe, Morris, Stahl, Stiles, Trevor & Wright 2010), as well as adaptations in cross-cultural training (Burba, Petrosko & Boyle 2001; Wei-Wen 2009). However, these are not fully applicable to corporate responsibility issues.

The actual content of the CR programme can also have local variations, where different aspects of CR are highlighted in different parts of the world, and there are several studies regarding this (e.g. Chaudhri 2006; Christmann 2004; Dobers & Halme 2009;

Huemer 2010; Jamali 2010; Muller 2006), but they don't directly address the communicational aspect: regardless of the approach or principles proclaimed, these need to be clear and consistent to a variety of employees.

Employees' role in CR has also inspired some studies regarding for example the employees' needs and preferences in internal communication (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka 2010), the link between leadership model and employees' values (Rok 2009), and between employee motivation and corporate environmental performance (Kaur 2011). Improving CR-related communications has been studied (Dawkins 2004; Du, Bhattacharya & Sen 2010), as well as the role of internal communication in increasing employee engagement, as can be seen from the overview by Welch (2011, 338–339), yet these often lack the international aspect. Internal communication is also mentioned as a central part of CR implementation (Maon, Lindgreen & Swaon 2009), but only briefly.

There seems to be a specific research gap in how companies manage their internal communication to implement corporate responsibility in different parts of the world. Studies also often focus for example on the national level, on only one aspect of CR (e.g. environmental performance) or on the employee perspective. The point of view in this study is thus more international and more strategic than perhaps in previous studies. The matter is arguably of high importance, as companies are only as responsible as their employees, and the potential irresponsibility in one country is reflected in a company's reputation in all countries. The need for tailored communications can be further highlighted, as the people who decide on the guidelines and the ones who need to act on them often work in very different cultural contexts and have varying tasks.

1.2 The purpose of the study

The purpose of the research is to study how companies implement corporate responsibility through internal communication on a global scale. The purpose can further be divided into the following sub objectives:

- How is the internal communication on corporate responsibility organised by the company internationally?
- How do companies communicate on responsibility issues with their employees?
- What kind of challenges and best practices can be identified in the process?

This research is positioned in the crossing of theories on corporate responsibility, international management and corporate communication (Figure 1). As the study combines such different disciplines, it could easily be linked to other closely related subjects as well, such as knowledge management or sharing, employee involvement, organisational structure, subsidiary and headquarter –relations and stakeholder theory.

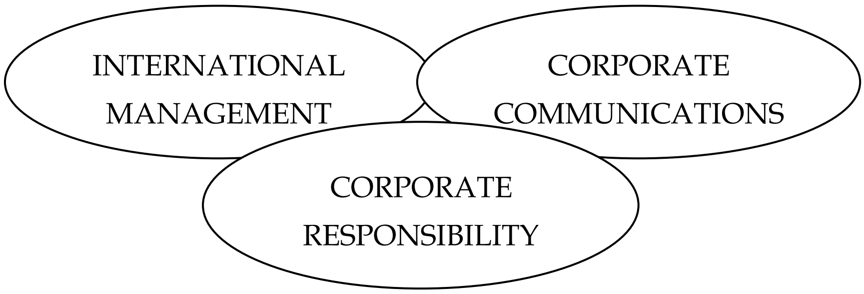

Figure 1 Theoretical background of the study

However, as the resources are limited, the focus of the research will remain in the main theories chosen, combining different aspects of international management and corporate communications, more accurately internal communications and the centralisation and decentralisation of related management, in the context of corporate responsibility. The research is conducted as a qualitative study by interviewing representatives of Finnish multinational corporations on their strategies and practices related to the issue.

In order to provide consistent practical examples, the focus will be on operations in Latin America. Even though far from a homogenous group of countries, their mutual language base, catholic and indigenous traditions and similar political histories (Puppim de Oliveira 2006) could serve as a common ground. From a Finnish standpoint, Latin America probably has not received as much attention as other emerging regions such as Asia or Africa, with the exception of Brazil. However, many Finnish companies have already established relations and continue to invest in the area. In March 2011 the Finnish Minister for Foreign Trade and Development made an export promotion trip to Peru, Argentina and Uruguay. In recent years, Latin America's share of Finland's foreign trade has ranged from two to three per cent, and future prospects are promising. (Minister Väyrynen to an --- 2011.) Thus, it is reasonable to believe that Latin America will be an important part of Finnish companies' operations.

The Latin American context is interesting also as a representative of emerging and developing economies, which have features that can hinder responsible practices. These include for example poor regulatory system, corruption and socio-economic conditions at both national and individual levels (Azmat & Samaratunge 2009, 443, 445–447). Even though countries such as Brazil, Chile and Mexico have made strong advances in corporate responsibility, there is still lot to do (Puppim de Oliveira 2006). Training and communication on responsibility issues is likely to be more challenging in these countries as well.

It would seem that adaptation of these issues is self-evident, and merely translating some documents is not sufficient to get through to employees. On the other hand, it can be that corporate responsibility is still mostly an idealistic concept, seen only in some external initiatives and on paper, and understanding and accepting the guidelines would depend on the employee's own interest and activity. Context-specific training and information to employees could be considered relevant only in case of an actual event or a concrete challenge that poses a public threat to the company's legitimacy. It could be suspected that responsibility communication is more significant on higher levels of the organisation, as the decisions made have bigger impacts. Also, there might be significant differences between and within companies, as the implementation of the training and communications is probably delegated downwards and thus depends on the efforts of the assigned individual.

The next chapter will focus on the theoretical background, international management and internal communication issues. In the third chapter the research design and the chosen methods are presented. In the fourth chapter the results are analysed, and the final chapter will give concluding remarks.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It has been argued that employees are crucial for CR-strategy in several ways, and that in MNCs it can be a real challenge to get the message through consistently to a large international personnel. A longstanding question in MNC research is, to what extent should subsidiaries adapt to local circumstances and on the other hand stay consistent with parent company's practices (Harzing 2004, 59).

In this part we will see different factors that contribute to implementing CR globally through employees. Among other things, Epstein (2008, 85–95) believes appropriate organisational and decision-making structures are crucial for implementing sustainability, and he also highlights the need for fluent information flow and the empowerment of local staff. Within international management the emphasis will thus be on the division of power and decision-making between headquarters and subsidiaries in different countries.

The first subchapter presents different models for managing the organisation internationally and their implications for coordination, whereas the second subchapter deals with the corporate responsibility communications between the company and its employees. In the end these are combined to see how they relate to implementing CR internationally through employees.

2.1 International management of corporate responsibility

Global companies are torn to two directions: the need for efficiency drives towards global integration and the need for responsiveness calls for local differentiation. The first part will present and compare international management strategies by Bartlett and Ghoshal and Heenan and Perlmutter, and then see what kind of implications these local and global strategies have also in the context of corporate responsibility.

Even though the theories are over 20 years old, they are still useful as they can be regarded as simplified views of the corporate attitudes towards international management. Bartlett and Ghoshal for example are also still widely referenced, and their model is possibly the most popular typology of MNCs in both academic and professional circles (Harzing 2004, 51; Husted & Allen 2006, 847; Rugman, Verbeke & Yuan 2011, 272). Their work has also been previously applied to the corporate responsibility context (Barin Cruz & Boehe 2010, Husted & Allen 2006).

2.1.1 Organisational strategies

In 1989 Bartlett and Ghoshal identified three existing strategies to international management: multinational, global and international. In the multinational strategy the company has strong local presence and it is sensitive to national differences. Responsibilities are decentralised and control is informal and based on relationships. In global strategy decision-making is centralised and the world is seen as one market. The role of subsidiaries is very limited. In international strategy the focus is on transferring and adapting knowledge from the headquarters to foreign markets. Headquarters is a strong coordinator and decision making is decentralised but formally controlled. (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 14–15, 49-52.)

However, it seems each of these strategies began to fail in a changing world, which posed three challenges to MNCs: global standardisation to increase efficiency; local adaptation to be responsive; and global learning to increase innovation. So Bartlett and Ghoshal created a fourth, at that point still non-existing strategy: the transnational, which combined the best of all the above strategies. This is best described as an integrated network, which requires managing complex flows of material and information. (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 16–17, 61–64.)

In human resource management, the strategies of Bartlett and Ghoshal have been linked to the management attitudes of Heenan and Perlmutter (Harzing 2004, 59). Heenan and Perlmutter distinguished four different attitudes to managing MNCs with regards to the home-country versus host-country relationships: ethnocentrism, polycentrism, regiocentrism and geocentrism. This classification describes companies' recruitment practices, but it can be seen as a more general representation of management orientation as well. Ethnocentric companies put home country people in key positions globally and have high level of orders and advice to subsidiaries. Polycentric companies leave everything to locals as long as their doing well, and they have very little communication between headquarters and subsidiaries. Regiocentrism sees the world in bigger markets and within these areas facilities and managers are serving beyond national borders. (Heenan & Perlmutter 1979, 17–21.)

Thus, connecting these three attitudes to the strategies of Bartlett and Ghoshal, the ethnocentric and global strategies support centralised decision-making from headquarters, while polycentric and multinational strategies rely on local independence. The international strategy is not so easily linked to the geocentric attitude, but the international strategy of Bartlett and Ghoshal has been disregarded in other studies as well (Harzing 2004), and Bartlett and Ghoshal have also been criticised for leaving out the regional aspect (Rugman et al. 2011, 256), which again is included by Heenan and Perlmutter.

Within the context of corporate responsibility this could mean that the multinational strategy emphasises local autonomy and conformity to local standards, whereas the global strategy has a consistent set of policies which are universally implemented (Huemer 2010, 266). The multinational strategy can cause fears that MNCs adapting to local contexts only wish to take advantage of the lower host country standards in developing countries (Muller 2006, 189). On the other hand, the global standardised strategy can be accused of being a purely western construct imposing responsibilities and rules on developing countries (Morse 2008). These are perhaps worst-case scenarios and generalisations, but still represent the risks involved with these strategies.

It is not necessarily that simple though, and the last pair, the transnational and the geocentric, can be seen as a sort of a compromise between the central and local strategies. The transnational/geocentric model is in many ways seen as ideal and the end result of a development process. However, few companies can fit any of the attitudes perfectly, and in fact many companies have qualities from all of the attitudes, and MNCs usually evolve from one attitude to another (Heenan & Perlmutter 1979, 21). To the purposes of this study, the transnational/geocentric model is presented as one possessing most desirable qualities.

These transnational/geocentric companies have a worldwide identity, but national interests are an important part, as they combine centralisation and local independence flexibly according to the context and the needs of the organisation. The ideal company is a worldwide entity where nationality is irrelevant, and resource allocation is optimised globally. It also supports the flow of information to both directions, allowing for worldwide learning. (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 16–17, 61–64; Heenan & Perlmutter 1979, 17–21.) The headquarters could even be seen as international coordinators, whose main task is to organise effectively the activities and expertise of the subsidiaries (Rugman et al. 2011, 274).

But the ideal structure might not be so easy to achieve, and it requires a lot of balancing from the company. Next we will see some challenges and benefits of the different sides of this approach in the context of corporate responsibility and communications.

2.1.2 Possible implications of central and local strategies

The transnational/geocentric solution aims to combine the best of standardisation and localisation, which both have their up- and downsides, and these aspects have been widely studied in the CR context. Corporate communications in general aim at a strong unified identity, and thus centralisation is often seen as a prerequisite to ensure consistent communications to all stakeholders (Trapp 2010, 157). Inadequate organisation of communication can lead to sending out conflicting messages, which thus supports strong integration and coordination of different communication disciplines (Cornelissen 2008, 120). However, one could assume that at least when CR practices are locally managed the related communications are also in local hands.

The decision to have either centralised or decentralised structures can depend on factors such as the organisation's size and its social and environmental impacts (Epstein 2008, 85–86). According to Yang and Rivers (2009, 157) MNC subsidiaries' adaptation to local CR practices is more extensive, when the institutional distance between the home and the host country is long and naturally when the host country has high demands regarding CR. However, the more the different subsidiaries depend on each other and the headquarters, the more likely they are to have standardised policies (Christmann 2004, 755–756). In short, when the subsidiary operates in a fairly evolved and active CR environment it is also likely to have localised and independent activities, but when the subsidiaries communicate and operate with others in the MNC network, their practices begin to resemble each other.

Integrating CR activities to a centralised department may create economies of scale and scope, as the standardisation can reduce organising costs by reproducing similar projects in different locations (Barin Cruz & Boehe 2010, 246). Centralisation perhaps has been the traditional way: at least subsidiaries in the developing countries have been the object of CR initiatives, rather than actively shaping the actual contents of CR (Gugler & Shi 2009, 7). Global CR strategies can be proactive and efficient, but they often lack legitimacy at local levels (Jamali 2010, 183; Muller 2006, 189). This is in line with the thoughts of Bartlett and Ghoshal, who say that centralisation can help implement new ideas quickly and efficiently, however, even when local needs are understood, the realisation is often over specified or over compromised, either way the result is not satisfying (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 58–59). There is also the danger that central controlling reduces the subsidiaries' initiative to start own projects or adopt voluntary policies (Muller 2006, 197). In essence, centralisation can weaken the CR-strategy, as initiatives might not have the aspired response and the overall interest in CR issues among local employees remains low. Within corporate communications the benefits and challenges are similar. Centralisation improves coordination, consistency to stakeholders and efficiency as research and materials can be shared (Cornelissen 2008, 127).

The decentralised organisation has advantages such as greater flexibility and increased responsiveness, local knowledge of markets, competitors and customers, and the autonomy can even create an environment that supports innovativeness. The challenges on the other hand include loss of scale economies and duplication of functions. It can also lead to inconsistencies between divisions and hinder the information flow between units. (Epstein 2008, 86.) This kind of lack of communication can possibly lead to overlapping activities and "reinventions of the wheel" (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 58–

59), which is in contrast with the ideal of fluent information change between subsidiaries.

With localised CR strategies it is also difficult to monitor and control the subsidiaries because of physical and cultural distance, and it can make the corporate CR strategy fragmented (Jamali 2010, 183, 185). This fragmentation is also referred to as having multiple identities, which can either help firms to deal with local demands and stakeholders or it could result in stakeholder confusion and loss of legitimacy (Huemer 2010, 265). Many stakeholders also operate and have contacts with the companies both on global and local levels, and thus getting mixed signals from the company representatives can create controversy. However, autonomous subsidiaries tend to be more proactive with CR as well, and autonomy does not necessarily mean the subsidiary's CR agenda would be in conflict with the overall CR-strategy (Muller 2006, 196). The starting point or the end result of decentralisation doesn't have to be completely opposite views, but slight modifications to a shared vision.

It also doesn't have to be only one or the other. The idea of the transnational/geocentric strategy is that it manages local and global CR issues on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration the factors affecting each issue (Husted & Allen 2006, 848). For sustainability issues, in many cases both central and local staff is needed. The personnel at facilities are responsible for operating and monitoring the actual sustainability activities, whereas the central staff does strategic planning, coordination and guidance throughout the organisation. (Epstein 2008, 88–89.) Cornelissen (2008, 128) also points out communications staff at headquarters needs to take an expert role, providing strategic advice and creating useful tools to ensure individual units become a part of the overall communications strategy.

In fact, Chaudhri (2006) believes CR initiatives in reality are rarely purely local or purely global. Companies can structure their CR programme by mixing global and local initiatives and implementation (Table 1). No strategy is necessarily better than the other. The decision depends on the needs and resources of the company, and a company could utilise all these different frameworks for its projects.

Table 1 Combining global and local CR (modified from Chaudhri 2006, 40)

		Initiative: Global	Initiative: Local
Implementation	Global	Consistent standards and processes	Programme extension or replication
Implementation	Local	Glocal / Mixed	Independent design and execution

The global-global model helps to create a strong global identity, but it might not be feasible to think one size would fit all. The global-local or mixed strategy is perhaps the most studied, and it reflects the idea of having global norms with local ways of explaining them. It is flexible, but it can be challenging to ensure compliance and alignment. The local-local strategy involves close collaboration with local stakeholders and can result in a lack of global CR identity. In the local-global model local prototypes are used with minor changes in similar locations, but this requires close communication. (Chaudhri 2006, 41–43.) The local-global model is interesting, as it also highlights Bartlett and Ghoshal's idea of information flows inside the company to all directions.

The information can flow from the MNC network to subsidiaries, but also from individual subsidiaries to the MNC network, and subsidiaries can independently create capabilities that can be then be made available to other units. Sometimes the challenges in different countries can be so diverse that it can be difficult to promote worldwide learning from local experiences. On the other hand, many countries also have similar social or environmental problems and thus they can learn from each other. (Barin Cruz & Boehe 2010, 243, 247, 251.) For example developing countries often have similar issues due to the socio-economic conditions (Azmat & Samaratunge 2009), and so they could share ideas and best practices. Studies indicate companies don't have enough coordinating structures such as teams and communication guidelines (Cornelissen 2008, 141).

This kind of sharing can be done through relational mechanisms like internal networks, where managers from different countries present their CR projects and best practices (Barin Cruz & Boehe 2010, 256). With the advancements of information and communications technology networking is easier than ever, as it has facilitated MNCs' access to distinct location advantages and improved internal coordination (Rugman et al. 2011, 255). Despite the possibilities offered by technology, especially in large companies it is still recommended that colleagues from different disciplines and units have regular internal conferences and meetings (Cornelissen 2008, 139). Communication and sharing between subsidiaries can be supported by using a shared global language (Luo & Shenkar 2006, 324). It all aims at facilitating communication between distant members of the same organisation.

Placing CR as a function in the organisational structure in general is another question. According to Barin Cruz and Boehe (2010, 246) CR should not be an isolated department of the corporation, detached from operations, but instead it should utilise for example cross-functional project teams. Dawkins also finds it important to generate cross-functional involvement in managing corporate responsibility. Engaging people across the business from human resources to investor relations "can be vital in winning space for corporate responsibility messages." (Dawkins 2004, 118.)

The organisational structure and the level of subsidiary independence is a big factor in how CR strategy is formed and communicated to the employees. However, this describes mainly the road of the message from one end to the other, but the realisation can still vary. The next chapter will focus on different ways of communicating, training and involving employees in CR.

2.2 Internal communication on corporate responsibility

According to Epstein (2008, 23-24) sustainability needs to be integrated into daily decision-making, and this can be reached with a clear and well-communicated strategy, senior management's commitment and appropriate structures and systems throughout the organisation. To Epstein, improving sustainability performance begins by communicating the importance of the issue to the employees through internal communication and training programs (Epstein 2008, 203). Employees are the ones who enact sustainability, and thus the communication needs to begin with them.

Employee communication needs to be a strategic tool for it to be effective. If managers fail to integrate communication in everything they do, internal communication is only a set of publications for the company news. Instead, strategic and meaningful communication needs to both inform and educate employees in the company's strategy and to motivate the employees to support that strategy. (Barrett 2002, 220.) So in essence, internal communication needs to both inform and instruct as well as to motivate and inspire the employees to truly commit to the company's vision of CR.

Effective internal communication must be in line with the corporate strategy, it uses all communication channels in the best possible way, the managers are involved and set an example and the messages should be tailored to the needs of the specific audiences (Barrett 2002, 221-222). Next we will take a more detailed look at some of these factors within corporate responsibility.

2.2.1 Channels of internal communication

The ways to communicate to employees are nearly without limits. Even external communications are seen as a way of internal communication, and on the other hand, internal communication is a part of external communication, as internal messages do not always remain internal (Cornelissen 2008, 195). Many messages become both external and internal, with or without purpose, and besides, many employees have dual roles, as they are also for example shareholders or customers of the company (Welch & Jackson 2007, 180). Employees are bound to be part of the audience for external communications. There is also a large number of external communicators of CR such as media, customers, monitoring groups and consumer blogs that are not entirely controlled by the company, yet still can have a remarkable influence on how the company is perceived as they are often considered more credible sources than the company itself when it comes to CR issues (Du et al. 2010, 13). However, here we concentrate on the communication intended for mainly internal use.

In general the channels of internal communication can be divided to three: face-to-face, print and electronic channels (Juholin 1999, 35–36). Some possible channels of internal communication related to CR issues are (Epstein 2008, 222; Smith 2005, 74–82):

- face-to-face: one-to-one or en-masse
- print: personnel magazines, corporate newsletters, letters from the CEO or the senior sustainability manager, posters or signs (key aspects of sustainability strategy)
- internet driven: emails, intranet (with information on sustainability management for easy access by personnel), databases (specific sustainability issues)
- audiovisual: broadcasts, email discussion groups, conference calls, DVDs, screens
- messages integrated into ongoing corporate communications
- events, games etc.

Electronic communication has largely replaced traditional media such as phone-calls, memos and brochures, the main channels being the Internet and e-mail (O'Kane, Hargie & Tourish 2004, 75–76). Also for training purposes electronic tools are widely used in international companies due to their relatively low cost, variety of content and comprehensive use (Edmundson 2009, 42). But printed materials have not been completely forgotten. They are a good way of ensuring important messages are stressed and elaborated, and they can serve as support for face-to-face activities, expanding and explaining particular points (Smith 2005, 77).

Wright found that at least in the early 1990s the majority of employee communications was dominated with technical products such as employee newsletters instead of developing actual relationships with employees (Wright 1995, 181), which can be seen as more important. Employees prefer to hear information from their immediate supervisor (Hargie & Tourish 2004, 247).

Effective employee communication uses all channels, but most importantly it prefers direct, face-to-face communication over indirect, print or electronic channels (Barrett 2002, 221). As early as 1983 it was noted that top management was becoming remote from employees and improvements were needed most in face-to-face communication (Morgan & Schiemann 1983). Employees truly seem to prefer face-to-face communication, especially direct contacts with senior managers (Hargie & Tourish 2004, 249), and across all sectors private one-to-one discussions are the most valued (Smith 2005, 74).

However, differing views do exist. Welch and Jackson (2007, 187) note that it is unrealistic to think that internal communication would principally consist of face-to-face communication, especially in bigger companies. This is certainly true when thinking of the official communication department and the scale of the company's worldwide operations, but it just makes the managers' role in internal communications all the more important (Kalla 2005, 309) compared to the messages sent from headquarters. Enhancing the communication from superiors is a possible way to also increase the amount of face-to-face communication and thus increasingly fulfil employee needs.

Cornelissen also distinguishes between management communication and corporate level communication. Management communication between employee and superior is often face-to-face and related to specific tasks and activities of the employee and to their morale and well-being, whereas corporate level communication uses different formal channels and informs all employees across the organisation about corporate decisions and developments in a standardised manner. (Cornelissen 2008, 196.) Different information needs call for different ways of communicating: information sharing can be effective through channels which reach all employees quickly, whereas motivational or more specific needs call for more personal communication. Usually face-to-face is considered to be the most expressive and thus used for handling the most important issues, whereas indirect channels are more suitable for routine issues (Juholin 1999, 36).

In a study among Danish workers with tasks or responsibilities related to environmental issues, the main channels for obtaining information about the company's environmental initiatives were for example safety representatives, information meetings, notice boards, and newsletters. Surprisingly, superiors and co-workers were generally not a major source of information. (Madsen & Ulhøi 2001, 59.) This is in slight contrast with the recommendations of other studies which emphasise the need for personal contacts. For example Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989, 202-203) highlight the importance of relationships and informal channels in corporate communications; personal contacts can be far more effective than formal systems. Uusi-Rauva and Nurkka (2010, 307) also found that regular informal meetings are an effective venue for raising discussion and spreading information, as opposed to for example e-mails which are easily disregarded.

The lack of peer and manager communication might be related to that employees may not necessarily see communication as an integral part of their own everyday work, but merely as a separate duty of the communications function (Kalla 2005, 309). They see themselves more as objects than as active producers of communication. Also at least in the individualist Finnish culture people are not inclined to make suggestions directly to their colleagues in order not to insult or interfere, and there also seems to prevail a certain kind of stigma in appearing "greener" than the average (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka 2010, 310). This is perhaps a limiting factor in that colleagues prefer not to discuss these matters when there is a normative aspect involved. For this reason it might be helpful to assign specific contact persons for CR issues (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka 2010, 310) in order to facilitate communication on responsibility among workers.

Using a mix of channels helps emphasise the importance of the issue (Smith 2005, 76), but each issues or entity should have only one or two main channels so that the employee knows where to find the most complete and recent information when needed (Juholin 1999, 159). It seems that personal contacts and face-to-face communication are more valued than written materials. Especially managerial communication is highlighted, and the next chapter will take this a little further to the top management level and also looks at the other side of this communication, namely employee involvement and feedback.

2.2.2 Two-way communication

To ensure sustainability, Epstein calls for the commitment of the top management: they should be knowledgeable, support and communicate to the organisation, and this will encourage the staff to also act consistently with the strategy (Epstein 2008, 50). The attitudes of senior managers represent the strategic intent of the organisation (Garavan et al. 2010, 595-596). Without managerial commitment employees might feel they can easily ignore ethical issues in their work (Collier & Esteban 2007, 27). If the top management is indifferent to ethical issues or even acts against the company guidelines, employees are likely to disregard them as well.

The executives' commitment to ethics shouldn't be visible only through bureaucratic and formal controls, but rather through the influence of their own behaviour on other organisation members (Watson & Weaver 2003, 85). The behaviour and public actions of the senior management is crucial in shaping an organisation's culture, especially in international companies where the leaders' example can be the most noticeable message among an abundant flow of information (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 204; Watson &

Weaver 2003, 80). Particularly the CEO can exert his influence, as CR messages coming from him draw attention far better than messages from other internal sources (Ligeti & Oravecz 2009, 149). The CEO should thus embed CR issues in his communication, as it might have the biggest and most receptive audience.

But including only the top management is not enough. The lower-level manager also represents the organisation and is one of the closest and most significant people within an individual employee’s work. Therefore the superior can have a remarkable influence on the employee’s attitude toward CR. In many cases superiors disregard CR issues when compared with short-term and cost-related concerns. (Garavan et al. 2010, 592.) Hine and Preuss (2009, 381) have also noted that the managers as “the agents of corporate bureaucracy” are often forgotten. Their research on UK middle managers suggest that CR is seen by managers as a result of external pressures, merely a new manipulative instrument for commercial purposes, where the means is more important than the end (Hine & Preuss 2009, 390–391). It seems that even though complying with the CR-related requirements at least to a certain extent, they don't actually believe or at least don't care if it’s useful in any way. This can be interpreted by the employees as an indication of the company’s priorities and the attitude of the manager is bound to spread among the employees. However, in another study Graafland and van de Ven (2006) found that managers had a positive attitude towards corporate responsibility from both financial and moral point of views.

Both top and mid-level management must thus set an example and model the behaviour they expect of their employees. They need to take responsibility for communications across the organisation, as they are in the position to either obstruct or facilitate open communication with and between employees. (Barrett 2002, 221.) Leaders need to use communication and rewards to guide ethical behaviour and align all formal and informal systems to create an “ethical infrastructure” (Rok 2009, 465). Management needs to set goals and priorities, but also help the employees to achieve them by providing specific training on CR issues (Govindarajulu & Daily 2004, 366). Commitment can be shown by allocating time for CR issues, as lack of time and priority in the corporate agenda can be a real barrier to implementing ideas (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka 2010, 307). Corporate responsibility remains rhetoric, if it is not prioritised both time and resource wise.

The attitudes of the top management can be seen already in the first phase: defining the company’s CR strategy. Individuals in charge of the CR programme can have a remarkable influence on how the CR guidelines are formed in the organisation and perceived by the employees (Ditlev-Simonsen 2010), usually reflecting the personal values of a very small number of managers (Garavan et al. 2010, 596). The fact that not all employees are aware of or even agree with the CR actions taken might be due to this reality, where initiatives are often started by a limited number of people in the company

(Ditlev-Simonsen 2010, 455). This has been the traditional way, where CR is implemented from the headquarters and employees are not involved in the development of policies (Rok 2009, 463). In some cases CR-decision making can be divided: regardless of the official corporate values or CR strategy, in reality it can be separate manifestations of the personal beliefs of just a few managers (Hemingway & Maclagan 2004, 36). Still, whether or not the CR-strategy is defined by the top management or separate managers, it seems it is rarely a representation of the company and its employees as a whole.

Employees are often just sent one-way messages about decisions made elsewhere in the organisation (Ligeti & Oravecz, 2009, 148). Mere top-down command may lead to employee frustration as their individual needs for autonomy and creativity are neglected (Cornelissen 2008, 194–195). Upward communication has significant organisational benefits (Tourish & Hargie 2004, 189–190) and an organisational climate open to bottom-up communication is also appreciated by the employees (Hargie & Tourish 2004, 248).

According to a representative of a consulting company, the most important factor in CR is that the employees are heard and included in the definition process: “The responsibility or irresponsibility of a company consists of the daily actions of its personnel and every employee brings his own values and practices to the company with him” (Mäkelä 2011, 6). As these personal values are present in any case, they should be included in the official values as well. Managers should encourage discussion and collect suggestions in order to facilitate employee initiatives and communication (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka 2010, 310). This kind of employee empowerment is believed to enhance the company’s sustainability (Govindarajulu & Daily 2004). Companies should allow employees among other stakeholders to influence the decision on what CR issues the company is going to support (Du et al. 2010, 16).

But listening to employees is not a simple task. The bigger the company, the more difficult it is to hear individual voices and it is practically impossible for senior managers to meet and discuss strategy with all employees (Welch & Jackson 2007, 187). For example in some Asian cultures hierarchical rules also prevent employees to speak up freely to their superiors (Smith 2005, 112). Organisational structures are also often inefficient in facilitating employee involvement, as they put limits on autonomy and decision-making power (Garavan et al. 2010, 595). However, there are specific channels to facilitate bottom-up communication.

Feedback from employees can be gathered through surveys, focus groups, brainstorming sessions and one-on-one meetings. Confidential surveys often provide objective and open feedback, whereas actual meetings can be used to generate new ideas. (Kauffman 2010, 47.) Tourish and Hargie (2004, 200) suggest that instead of relying only on written or mediated messages from employees, managers should have regular and direct contact with all levels of staff and consciously seek out critical feedback. In addition to sharing ideas and suggestions, upward communication also allows employees to ask questions of senior managers and further information on organisational developments (Cornelissen 2008, 197). Enabling contact with senior managers as well, and letting employees voice their concerns is a way to reassure employees that they are heard and the managers are there for them and not an isolated unit.

However, it is not enough to provide the channels for feedback, it must also be listened, analysed and lead to appropriate measures when necessary. If nothing is done with the feedback, it will eventually discourage the employees to share their thoughts (Tourish & Hargie 2004, 200). When employees feel speaking up is unwise or without consequence, they remain silent (Cornelissen 2008, 199). Sometimes the problem is not necessarily in the amount of upward communication, but in the quality and truthfulness of it (Tourish & Hargie 2004, 203). Some managers can even discourage critical feedback, as negative comments are feared, thus possibly leading to a distorted image of their situation based on only positive feedback (Cornelissen 2008, 200; Tourish & Hargie 2004, 190). Employees in fear of getting fired remain silent or only give positive feedback which is welcomed and rewarded.

2.2.3 Content of internal communication

This part focuses on the level of training and communication: whether the employees should receive detailed instructions for what to do, or if they should be educated on the upper-level principles and motivated to understand the CR strategy. One example of this could be promoting CR through values and codes of conduct. Codes are formal documents varying from highly specialised compliance programmes to a small number of general principles such as the Global Compact, and they often define forbidden behaviour. Values on the other hand emphasise positive and desirable qualities in the organisational culture and identity. Many companies have both values and codes to support each other. (Collier & Esteban 2007, 21.) It could be generalised, that company values motivate employees to aspire for the same goals, whereas codes of conduct in their most specific form give instructions on how to act according to the values. Both might be needed, even though Watson and Weaver (2003, 89) found that in a global setting formal structures and policies might have a limited influence on corporate ethics across cultural regions and more informal approaches are needed. It can be difficult to create one formal code suitable to every culture, whereas informal modelling is more easily fitted to local needs.

According to Smith (2005, 83), the most visible and possibly involving way of demonstrating corporate responsibility to employees is by engaging them in community work. However, when it comes to linking CR to the actual tasks of the employees, raising awareness is not sufficient for sustainability training; instead the training should include specific procedures and management issues so the employees can have tools to use in an actual situation (Epstein 2008, 203). Uusi-Rauva and Nurkka (2010, 306) found that employees prefer simple, practical and concrete messages or instructions, especially if their tasks are not directly linked to environmental impacts. The situations that require ethical deliberation might seem overwhelming, or some small improvements in the daily activities could feel like too much work, unless given clear instructions.

Some issues can be more easily turned into practical and comprehensible guidelines than others. Communicating about safety issues is often more easy than communicating for example about environmental issues, because the effects of safety violations are visible and there are clear guidelines to avoid them (Chinander 2001, 288). With safety issues it is easier to show the employees the consequences of their actions and also to provide simple instructions.

However, from the strategic point of view simple instructions are not sufficient for integrating sustainability into everything the company does. Even awareness of CR policies does not necessarily mean these policies are understood, let alone supported by the employees. In fact, employees often have misconceptions concerning the policies and are unaware of the company's CR activities. (Garavan, Heraty, Rock & Dalton 2010, 589.) It seems the communication needs to go on a deeper level, because the way to turn a general corporate idea into actions is to get the employee to understand the logic behind the idea and accept the importance of the objectives, as well as giving the employees a direct role in achieving those objectives (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 176). The employee must realise the connection between his actions and the desired result (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 181-182). If the ethics policy is communicated through memos and documents that have no direct relevance to the employee’s personal responsibilities and goals, the communication or the ethics policy are not likely to be taken seriously (Collier & Esteban 2007, 26). So the responsibility communication should be linked to the employee’s actual tasks and possibilities of making a difference.

In addition to explaining the actual activities, organisations need to relate these activities to the opportunities and challenges in the external environment in order to reach a better understanding (Welch & Jackson 2007, 190). Employees should understand the context and background of the organisation’s CR approach, including the reasons for adopting a specific approach and its relevance to the existing organizational objectives (Maon et al. 2009, 81). The employees are more motivated when they can see their own tasks and responsibilities in the bigger context of the company and the whole society. When it comes to corporate responsibility, this bigger context could relate to for example the promotion of environmental or social issues or to responding to stakeholder needs and thus improving the company’s reputation. However, different people are motivated by different things.

The business-case for CR seems to be the most effective way of motivating employees. In the study of Uusi-Rauva and Nurkka (2010, 308), the interviewees believed most employees to be more interested in cost benefits than environmental benefits. At least in the Finnish context, environmental issues are still not a priority to some employees and actions are only taken if they don't require too much effort (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka 2010, 310). In this case CR goals can be linked to the overall performance of the company to increase employee motivation. However, a growing number of employees are ethically motivated, and as Rok (2009, 463) puts it, expect their employers to make a positive social and ecological contribution to the society. In some cases moral motives may even be the most influential in determining the total CR motivation of each employee (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams & Ganapathi 2007, 842), and when that is the case, highlighting financial advantages of CR might even weaken the natural moral motivation (Graafland & van de Ven 2006, 121). This could be interpreted so, that if the company seems too focused on the business case, it might seem insincere and off-putting and weaken the overall CR credibility.

Rohweder (2004, 158) suggests the training should be a combination of both sustainability and business-case arguments, as stakeholders are capable of perceiving and understanding mixed motives (Du et al. 2010, 10). It seems the most influential motives are linked to corporate identity, in particular the role of corporate values, employees’ willingness to protect the company’s reputation, and including social issues in the responsibility communication (Trapp 2010, 164). Here at least the company reputation is directly linked to business-case arguments, whereas the two others might appeal to the ethical side.

Whatever the motivation is to act responsibly, employees might not be in line with the actions of the company. They might see the organisation’s CR activities to be ineffective and a waste of resources, or they might simply not agree with the company’s responsibility agenda (Garavan et al. 2010, 592).

The employees’ background and personal beliefs obviously determine what motivates them, and also to how they interpret the messages received. Thus it should be considered if communications should be adapted according to the needs of specific audiences.

2.2.4 Tailoring internal communication

Internal communication can be source of an information overload, and there is a risk employees lose interest altogether and become more passive (Ligeti & Oravecz 2009, 148). To avoid sending too much information, it is important to analyse employee preferences for the content of the messages to make sure it meets employees' needs (Welch & Jackson 2007, 187–188). However, it is important to remember the information given needs to remain consistent, regardless of the adaptation (Barrett 2002, 221). Some believe the actual standards shouldn't be universally applied as they are strongly influenced by western values (Gugler & Shi 2009, 11), but this is not the general view. It should be possible to make programs relevant for different audiences without compromising the core concepts of the training program; only the way in which the message is presented is tailored to the target population (Burba et al. 2001, 269).

Some believe employees as audience should be differentiated based on for example demographics, occupation or structural levels (Smith 2005, 74; Welch & Jackson 2007, 184). This differentiation would then serve as a base for tailoring the information according to the audience, to make sure the message is relevant to each group. For example each business unit or division should convert the overall message of the headquarters into a more comprehensible message the employees can understand and act upon. (Barrett 2002, 221.)

Training could be more focused to front-line employees and to those who have a direct influence, but it is important that no employee group is neglected (Govindarajulu & Daily 2004, 366–367). It is essential that also the operating personnel understands what they need to do and why it is so important to the company to act responsibly. Different departments and units contribute in different ways, and all ways are important for the overall sustainability performance. (Epstein 2008, 92.) The communication needs to focus on the issues important to each employee's tasks.

Another basis for differentiation could be the culture of the employees. There are conflicting interests and objectives even in national contexts, not to mention in comparison between different home and host countries. For example attitudes toward work and authority and criteria for wage scales can differ widely, payment of publicly recognised facilitation fees might not be considered corruption, and gender-neutral employment guidelines can be seen as a disregard for women's special status. (Bird & Smucker 2007, 2–3.) The importance of particular issues also differs between countries. What some consider insignificant and not even as an ethical issue, might for others be a matter of core values. With this in mind, it is obvious that whatever the internal corporate message is, it will be interpreted in very different ways by employees in different cultures and positions unless the message is somehow adapted.

Employees in different cultures might not disagree with the overall content of the message, but with the style and way of introducing it (Helin & Sandström 2008, 289). The ethical guidelines might be widely accepted, but the training can seem for example patronising or even misleading.

When for example an e-learning course is designed in the headquarters, it is embedded with the cultural values and characteristics of the country of origin, and thus creates challenges for learners from other cultures. Ideally all employees should be able to achieve the same learning outcomes with the same amount of effort, regardless of their culture of origin. (Edmundson 2009, 42.) This is not only applicable to electronic training, but in some sense to all global training and communications.

The tailoring can begin with small and even obvious things, such as language. Using a foreign language in general lowers the employees' information access and power within the organisation (Luo & Shenkar 2006, 323.) Conversely, using the native tongue in training allows for the learner to concentrate on the issue instead of merely understanding the foreign language. Translations should also be carefully made, so that idioms and cultural references fit the target audience. (Chang 2009.) Translations should be done by a native living in the target country (Smith 2005, 111).

The materials developed in one country contain other hidden differences as well, such as learning styles, values, and religious influences. For example in e-learning tools these visual and textual differences such as icons, symbols, gestures, colour preferences and taboos can be addressed with localisation or modularisation, the use of different formats, media or teaching techniques. For example Brazilians prefer relationships, thus using an e-learning course without any personal interaction at some level can create problems. (Edmundson 2009, 42–43.) On the other hand, in South East Asia face-to-face communication and getting feedback may be more difficult as traditional hierarchies inhibit younger employees from questioning more senior staff (Smith 2005, 112).

Taking it even further, using local trainers and letting the local organisation create their own methods and materials ensures the training corresponds to local needs and simultaneously increases local empowerment (Chang 2009). Edmundson refers (2009, 44) to a similar strategy named "origination", which means building the local training programme from the beginning with the full participation of representatives of the target culture. In that case it must be ensured that the local programme is still in line with the original message.

The need and possibility of adapting internal communication also depends on the organisational structure of the company. The next chapter will draw up the theoretical framework built during these two previous chapters, identifying the possible challenges and best practices of the process.

2.3 Internal communication of corporate responsibility issues in the multinational company

The different aspects of international management and internal communication can now be combined to present the possible issues of implementing corporate responsibility globally (Figure 2). They are interrelated as the different aspects of communication depend on the decision of to what extent the company has localised decision-making and how strongly it coordinates the information flows between subsidiaries. Together these will then also help determine and manage the need for tailoring of the communication.

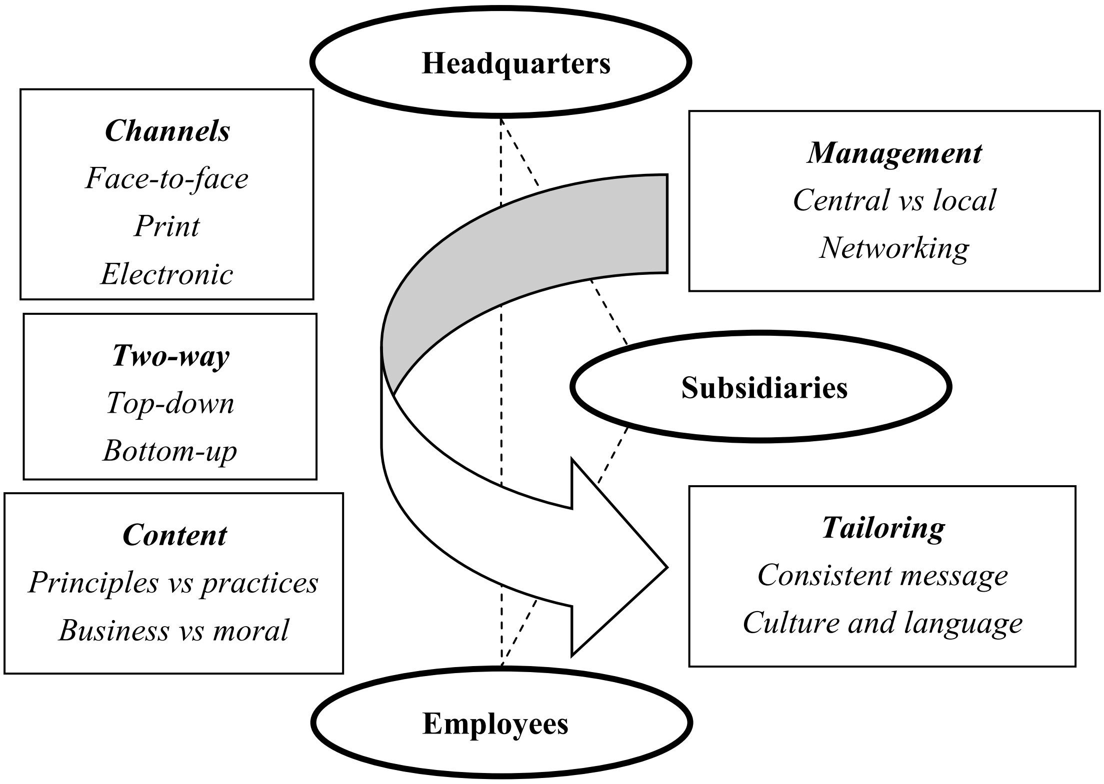

Figure 2 Issues in international management of internal communication related to corporate responsibility

The starting point is the strategy for international management. The level of decentralisation helps the company level the efficiency and local responsiveness of its functions. Even with highly localised management of CR and communications the company can support its consistent image by coordinating information flows and by promoting learning from and between subsidiaries. The company can use mixed approaches as well, combining central and local management according to the needs of the issue at hand.

The channels for central and local communication are supposedly a bit different. Electronic channels help reach the whole organisation quickly and can therefore serve central communication better, whereas face-to-face communication is supposedly more related to management communication and thus more locally used. Management communication altogether seems important, and especially the commitment of top executives. Employees should be included in the process of defining the company's CR strategy and their feedback, both positive and negative, should be solicited. This kind of empowerment can be referred to at both subsidiary and individual employee level, as localised decision-making is a step towards employee involvement.

Employees need to be both informed and motivated by communicating of different levels of corporate responsibility, providing them with both practical instructions as well as more general principles. The company's corporate responsibility policy needs to be linked to the employees own tasks as well as to the company's overall strategy and the external environment. Employees can feel motivated to support corporate responsibility for both moral motives as well as for more instrumental motives, believing corporate responsibility is beneficial to business.

As the information needs as well as the motives are very different between employees around the world, communication should be tailored. The overall message and the guiding principles need to remain consistent, yet to make the message understandable to different audiences; cultural factors need to be considered. Between the extremes of fully standardised and fully decentralised communication a variety of translation and localisation aspects are a part of the coordination of communication.

This framework is then studied in practice from a strategic point of view by interviewing representatives of Finnish multinational companies. In the next chapter the research methods will be explained in detail before moving on to analysing the results.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter the chosen research approach is presented along with the arguments for different methodological choices. The data collection methods and the analysis of this data are described as well as the phases of this process. In the end, the trustworthiness of the study is evaluated. The study is a qualitative case study conducted by interviewing company representatives.

3.1 Research approach

Qualitative methods were seen as more suitable for this study. Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2004, 125) divide research strategies into three categories: experimental, quantitative (survey) and qualitative (field-work or participant observation). However, only the two latter are generally presented and compared. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008; Hirsjärvi et al. 2004; Koskinen, Alasuutari & Peltonen 2005). Hirsjärvi et al. (2004, 26–127) still wish to emphasise that quantitative and qualitative are not necessarily two opposite or conflicting ways of doing research, but they complete each other.

This is a descriptive research, as the purpose of the study is to answer the question "*how* companies implement corporate responsibility through internal communication on a global scale". A descriptive study asks how or what kind, whereas an explanatory study asks why or what follows (Hirsjärvi & al. 2004, 120). Both 'how' and 'why' -questions are typical in case studies (Myers 2009, 73).

As the companies themselves are not the object of interest but instead serve as a tool to understand the issue of internal communication of responsibility issues in global companies, this study can be described as an extensive case study, which studies multiple cases to find common characteristics (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 118-120). Case studies are used in the early stages of research on a particular topic to discover relevant features or factors of the issue. As generally in case studies, this research uses empirical evidence from real people in actual organisations. (Myers 2009, 5, 73.) The contribution of the study is mainly managerial, as case study research is often practically oriented (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 116).

The research question here is relatively unstudied, and a deeper knowledge of the phenomenon is required. The research hopes to describe the studied process from different points of view. Thus, the study will be realised through qualitative research. According to Eriksson and Kovalainen qualitative research mainly aims to interpret and understand the subject. Qualitative research can serve both as a preliminary study for quantitative methods and as a deeper investigation to an issue left unclear in a quantitative approach. However, they underline that qualitative research is an adequate method of knowledge production by itself, not only when combined with quantitative methods. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 5.) Hirsjärvi et al. (2004, 128) further simplify the difference by saying quantitative deals with numbers and qualitative with meanings. Through qualitative research it is possible to see the context where decisions and actions take place, and the best way to understand that context is by talking to people (Myers 2009, 5).

The findings of this study will be compared to the theoretical framework combined of a number of studies on related subjects, but the purpose is not to test any specific hypotheses. As the previous research on this particular subject is limited, no grounded hypothesis can be made. Instead, qualitative research aims to reveal unexpected things by carefully analysing the data (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 155).

3.2 Data collection and analysis

For this study interviews were chosen as the appropriate method of data collection. It is one of the basic methods in addition to surveys, observation and documents. There is no pre-existing or readily available material from companies on this subject, as companies don’t publish much of their internal activities and processes and the subject is relatively new. The research question could only be answered by getting access to people. Resource limitations also affected the method choice.

In an interview the researcher is in direct interaction with the interviewee, which offers a great deal of flexibility. Interviews have been the main data collection method in qualitative research. Interviews are often chosen when the subject is little known or when it can be expected that the direct answers need specifications and further arguments from the respondent. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 193–195). Interviews are often the only way to study the meanings and interpretations people have of things (Koskinen et al. 2005, 106).

In this study semi-structured theme interviews were used. Interviews can be divided into three groups: structured, theme and open interviews. Theme interviews were used, as the interviewer could not know beforehand what kind of answers to expect from the respondents, and thus could not determine the course of the interview in advance with set questions. A theme interview has a limited set of pre-determined themes, but without an exact formulation and order of questions. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 197–198.) However, in this case the interviewees could familiarise themselves with the themes beforehand in order to collect their thoughts. Koskinen et al. (2005, 104–105) use the term “semi structured” as a synonym for theme interview. To back up the themes, the researcher had prepared more specific sub questions as well to make sure all relevant issues were discussed. In the interviews many of these questions were left out, as the issues surfaced naturally, but also new questions arose during the interviews. This form was chosen to allow for unexpected and even seemingly unrelated themes to come up in the interview, but still to make sure all aspects of the subject were included. As a result, the interviews followed their individual paths and differing issues became more relevant than others in the interviews, as the respondents spoke of the aspects they found most important or they had most knowledge about.

First in the spring of 2011 two consultants were interviewed to get a more general outlook of the situation through experience from several companies and industries. They were also able to give some normative opinions. The interviewees were chosen through convenience sampling whereby suitable people are found by asking recommendations (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 52). This was done to find the best possible knowledge of the particular topic and also to possibly gain access more easily through previous contacts. First suggestions were asked from contacts working at The Centre for Responsible Business (CeReB) at Turku School of Economics (TSE).

Later in the fall of 2011 company representatives were interviewed. The companies were chosen systematically, but again when choosing the people inside the company, suggestions from the interviewed experts were taken into consideration.

The aim was to interview representatives of Finnish multinational corporations that have wide international operations and own offices or plants abroad. The companies were chosen from the Kauppalehti list of the 2000 biggest companies in Finland in 2010 (2000 suurinta yritystä 2010). From this list the ones were chosen, that were headquartered in Finland and also had activities in Latin America, so that practical examples of that area could be used. Within the biggest 60 companies, 14 companies based in Finland clearly inform in their website to have some own activities in Latin America. An interview request was sent by e-mail to these companies, and later on another if there was no response. The person contacted was either identified through information from the corporate website or by the tips from the previous expert interviews. Also some persons contacted had forwarded the message to other people they found more suitable to give the interview. Of the 14 companies approached only one did not respond in any way and one refused without telling a reason. Two refused because they felt their company was not yet in the position to give interviews on the subject. Also five of the companies felt they didn't have sufficient Latin American experiences, but two of these agreed to the interview anyway. Lack of time as a reason was clearly specified by only one company, but three other companies supposedly also gave up because of time constraints, as a suitable time for an interview with the correct person could not be found despite the willingness to participate. In the end five companies were interviewed and included in the study. All the interviews were taped and backed-up with notes, and later on transcribed. The list of the interviewees and the length of the interviews can be seen the following table.

Table 2 Interviews

Expert	Consultant, CR	47 minutes (Skype)
Expert	Consultant, Communications	34 minutes (phone)
Company A	Manager, CR	1 hour 15 minutes (in person)
Company B	Director, CR	32 minutes (in person]
Company C	Manager, Internal communications	50 minutes (in person)
Company D	Director, Environment Director, Internal communications	47 minutes (in person) 18 minutes (phone)
Company E	Director, Communications	37 minutes (in person)

The titles of the interviewees are generalised, so that they cannot be recognised because of a specific word in their title. The rank is denoted with "manager" (lower) or "director" (higher) and the area of expertise is simplified, for example titles for responsibility or sustainability are here marked as CR. However, as for example the sizes of companies' CR or communications teams have large variation, neither the actual titles nor the simplified titles here are necessarily comparable in rank or tasks.

The companies in the study wish to remain anonymous, so only a limited amount of information on them can be given. All the companies are exchange-listed and operate in a business-to-business environment in several countries. When talking about Latin America, Brazil is the most common point of reference. Three of the companies employ 3 000-12 000 people and two employ around 30 000 people. All of the companies operate in areas where sustainability issues are important, either because of use of natural resources or because of the effects of the products and solutions they sell.

The first interview was the longest, and to the following interviews the themes and additional questions were limited and more focused in order to stay inside the 60-minute estimate given to interviewees beforehand. In company D, the primary interviewee felt she was not able to give accurate answers to all the questions, so later on another person was contacted for further information on these specific topics.

In qualitative research the term saturation is used to define the amount of data gathered. It refers to the point where the data seems sufficient, as the same themes come up repeatedly and new data brings no relevant new information. The amount of data doesn't need to be pre-determined, but the researcher can continue until saturation has been reached. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 171.) In this study two expert interviews and five company interviews is very close to the saturation point, as several themes were mentioned repeatedly. However, some new themes also came up in each interview, which also gave ideas for additional questions for the following interviews. More interviews would have been conducted if more companies would have agreed to participate. Also, saturation is a subjective concept and the researcher might never reach it fully, as qualitative research often sees every case as unique (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 171).

Two of the sub objectives were operationalised to interview themes (Table 3). This was done through the themes in the theory. The themes were presented to the interviewees with the help of examples and more specific questions. The third sub objective was not divided into themes, but posed as an explicit question itself to the interviewees, to find out what they identified as their companies' challenges as best practices. In addition, comments from the other themes were used in the analysis.

Table 3 Operationalisation chart

Research objective	Sub objectives	Theory	Interview themes
How do companies implement corporate responsibility through internal communication on a global scale?	How is the communication on corporate responsibility organised by the company internationally?	2.1. International management strategies	Organisational structure for CR and communication Coordination of communication
	How do companies communicate on responsibility issues with their employees?	2.2. Internal communication	Channels of communication Content of communication Two-way communication Tailored communication
	What kind of challenges and best practices can be identified in the process?		(Explicit question Previous themes)

The interview themes were divided according to the sub objectives, but as the themes are interrelated, also the responses were somewhat overlapping. Some supporting questions were prepared, but their use varied between respondents. Each interview also suggested new questions to the upcoming interviews. In qualitative research it can be expected that the research objective might change as the research progresses (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 117). In this study the sub objectives were modified slightly after the first expert interviews, and after all the interviews were conducted the main objective and the sub objectives were modified again, also leaving them open for further changes after the analysis. The original emphasis of the study was on the cultural localisation of the communication, but during the interviews the focus moved towards the structure and ways of communication in general.

In this study the transcribed interviews were analysed through the original operationalisation themes led from the theory. In the analysis of the data, the question frame for theme interview is a useful tool for coding. The first step of the theme analysis is to find and separate the issues relevant to the research question. Theme analysis can also help gather a collection of different answers or results to the questions. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 153, 176, 180.) First each interview was analysed separately and under each theme the comments related to that theme were synthesised. Some comments were related to more than one theme. In the end of this preliminary analysis, each theme included the syntheses of related information of each company.

Conclusions cannot be made directly from observation or material, but only through critical consideration and analysis. The interpretation includes clarifying the ideas that stand out from the data. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 172, 213.) However, the data and the analysis are linked and the analysis phase and the data gathering phase are not completely separate (Myers 2009, 165). The researcher can organize and combine thoughts of the respondents, possibly discovering some links or meanings the respondent himself had not realized consciously and wouldn't be able to express explicitly. In the analysis quoting the respondents is not sufficient, but they need to be interpreted and analysed (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 180–181).

The summaries of each particular theme were then compared to find for example repetition, conflicts or interrelatedness, and a final synthesis was formed under each theme. These were interpreted and analysed and quotes were provided to support the analysis. As the interviews were all held in Finnish, the quotes have been translated into English.

3.3 Limitations and evaluation of the research

Reliability and validity are common concepts for evaluating research in quantitative studies. A study is valid when the results correspond to the original research question, and reliable when the results are consistent. These concepts cannot be applied as such to qualitative research. (Koskinen et al. 2005, 254–255.) An alternative way of evaluating qualitative research is through the criteria of trustworthiness, which focuses on the research process and the researcher himself (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 211). The trustworthiness of a study can be evaluated through four concepts: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, which have slightly different meanings for different authors (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 294; Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 212–213).

Credibility refers to how the results and claims correspond to the original data (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 294) or if the concepts used in the interpretation are similar to those of the respondents (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 212). As the interviews can also be seen as a way of stakeholder communications, it felt that at times the interviewees were keen to give a good impression and thus present their company in a good light and talk in a positive tone. In the interview situations several concepts were explained and handled thoroughly, so it is likely the researcher and the respondents understood them similarly. On many occasions both the interviewer and the respondents asked for clarification on certain words or what was meant with a particular phrase. As the interviews were taped, possibly ambiguous comments could be listened and interpreted in the original context with the actual intonation and emphasis to make sure they were understood correctly.

In qualitative research the researcher cannot fully separate himself from the subject, as his values and pre-existing ideas influence his way of interpreting the data. In a traditional sense, objectivity cannot be achieved. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004, 152.) In this study the researcher's expectations perhaps had a stronger influence in the forming of the original interview questions than in the actual analysis.

In transferability the similarity to previous studies and to other research contexts is assessed (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 294). In this research no particular company was studied, and the research subject was defined more generally as "Finnish multinationals". One of the companies is fairly new, so its processes related to internal sustainability communications were not yet as far developed as the others. Also the personnel has large variation, between 3 000 and 30 000. Generalisation is not pursued.

The industry sector affects the sustainability strategy and focus of the company, also suggesting greater opportunities or risks in certain areas. Industry-related factors are for example high exposure (consumer products), environmental impact (products with high use of natural resources) and high regulation (products with safety issues). (Epstein 2008, 49.) As noted, all of the interviewed companies serve business clients. However, due to certain incidents in their industry in recent years, one of the companies seems to have received a bit more consumer and media attention related to sustainability issues than the others. For most of the companies, sustainability is an important factor in their end-products and solutions they offer to customers, even more so than in their own operations, whereas others are also highly dependent on natural resources. The results could thus be transferable to the biggest Finnish multinationals in business-to-business area with close linkage to sustainability issues.

Dependability is evaluated through the documenting of the research process (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 294). The data used as well as the actual process have been documented and explained. The expert interviews were conducted by phone and by Skype, which could have affected the situation compared to an actual face-to-face interview. The company interviews were held face-to-face, in meeting rooms of the companies involved. At times the communication felt rushed and perhaps the respondents were trying to keep their answers short and simple. The expert interviews were held several months before the company interviews and the company interviews were held within a little over a month. In this time no particular change in the external environment was detected, that could have affected the companies practices or attitude regarding the studied subject.

Conformability is about linking findings to the data in an understandable way (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 294). Quotes and examples are used extensively to support the analysis, so that the reader can follow the path of thoughts. However, it is debatable whether or not the respondents were enough to provide accurate information and more interviews could have led to slightly different interpretations.

As the respondents were in different positions in their companies, it can be assumed that their point of views are also slightly different and they felt most comfortable talking about their own area of expertise, not necessarily seeing the big picture. Again, this can be a challenge as well as a benefit. This way it is also possible to discover different sides of the same process. Overall the results correspond to the research objectives. More emphasis could have been put on the cultural adaptation aspect, but on the other hand, knowledge of the national or general perspective is an essential basis for adaptation. All this doesn't necessarily lessen the results of this research, but merely implies the need for further research.

4 IMPLEMENTING CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

This part consists of the analysis of the interviews. Both the consultants' and the companies' interviews are analysed here, so that comparison can be made throughout the analysis. In many issues the statements are alike, but the differences will be highlighted in the analysis. The consultants cannot give accurate and detailed information of any specific process of a company. They suspect that in practice the processes and practices vary greatly depending on the company size, industry and situation. Many of their comments are made from a normative point of view, admitting that very few companies have the resources or knowledge to bring these ideals to life. On the other hand, the company respondents seem to be fairly satisfied with their way of doing things, even though constant development in the issue is also a given. In the analysis the consultants' ideal is thus compared to the companies' reality.

The results are presented according to the research objectives. In the following analysis, "companies" refers to the companies that participated in the study, not companies in general. The original idea was to focus on examples from Latin America, however, even before the interviews many companies claimed not to have that many examples of the region. The focus is thus more general, and cultural examples are provided from various countries.

4.1 Global management and coordination of internal communication

The consultants stress that in order for corporate responsibility to be an asset to the company, it needs to be a part of the strategy and fully integrated to all activities. The companies seem to have understood that as well, as it can be seen at least in their rhetoric and in some organisational structures as well.

> *"We don't want to have a separate unit for corporate responsibility, but instead truly invest in having the know-how in our businesses, in the field and with the people actually doing the work." (Director, Environment.)*

All the companies state more or less explicitly that corporate responsibility should not be a separate department nor should related issues be communicated separately from other issues. It needs to be integrated to all activities. However, the consultants suspect not many Finnish companies have reached this integration. It is possible the companies in this study happen to be among the few forerunners, but it is also possible the companies are speaking of an ideal or future self.

In one company the respondent is the only one assigned solely to corporate responsibility and in two companies there is no particular manager or department for corporate responsibility. Also, locally CR and communication tasks are often not the main responsibility of the person, but for example added to the role of HR-manager or similar. This supports the integration ideal presented by previous studies (Barin Cruz & Boehe 2010, 246; Dawkins 2004, 118), even though it must be noted that dedicating a department to corporate responsibility does not necessarily mean it is less integrated to other functions. At least in the beginning someone probably has to manage and coordinate the process, but everyone should participate. The same idea can be applied to communication as well, by delegating and integrating it to all activities.

> *"Our goal is to have interactive communications instead of all of it coming from one place… in a way that it would be decentralized, that people would participate and produce content in other parts as well, not just in the headquarters or in the communications department." (Director, Communications.)*

Having people from different countries, functions and departments to contribute to corporate communications can come naturally, when the companies are mostly organised as a matrix, operating in several business areas and several geographical areas. The business areas are responsible for a large part of their own communications, and only the group-level communications are organised from the headquarters. In a way the business areas then have their own headquarters, and within these business areas people are situated around the world.

> *"Every business area has its own person for communication ---- wherever the management is. Altogether we have very little activities in Finland." (Director, CR.)*

In matrix organisations most of the projects are global and actually very few activities would be considered purely local. The attitude is very global and lower-level functions are widespread, following the geocentric approach of Heenan and Perlmutter. However, only one of the companies explicitly states their group-level CR and communications teams are global to begin with, as the members are from different continents and everything is planned together.

> *"In practice the cooperation and mutual learning are automatic. The communication is not like --- we would form a message here, and then throw it to China or Brazil, where our communications personnel would then start thinking of how to translate this to the local people." (Manager, CR.)*

The message is formed together to the needs of a global audience. This is not to say that in other companies the teams would operate somehow detached from their colleagues in other countries. All in all, even though group-level teams seem to be dominated by Finnish personnel, communications are also delegated worldwide. One company stresses that they don't use any expatriate workers. Local personnel communicate very independently, especially when it comes to the practical, daily matters and issues directly related to employees and the local community.

> *"Surely we offer tools, but it is obvious that we can't possibly know what the most important themes in our Brazilian factory are this fall, for example if they have some safety issues they need to inform the personnel about." (Manager, CR.)*

The respondents agree that local people are the only ones capable of responding to local needs, and so they shouldn't be directed or managed from the headquarters. This is stated fairly strictly, as if though trying to avoid the western imperialist image presented by Morse (2008). It seems respect for locals is extremely important, but it can also make monitoring and controlling difficult (Jamali 2010, 183).

Only in one company for example product-related communication is checked to make sure the concepts and the message is consistent. The same company was also the only one who believed there was no remarkable amount of overlapping activities or unnecessary repetition of projects or activities. This could be interpreted as a natural result of the stronger central coordination. In smaller companies the information sharing might come more naturally and no formal coordination is thus needed. Most companies clearly don't want to instruct or control the local communications, but some form of informal monitoring is mentioned. Possible problematic issues can be detected in passing through other interaction and information sharing.

Business areas and local actors follow well the general corporate message and nowadays there is very little misguided communications, which a couple of the respondents say is due to the growing amount of communications and information on the issues in general and from the group level. As people are more aware of CR-related matters, the communication is also more accurate. As noted earlier, local autonomy does not necessarily mean the subsidiary's CR agenda would be in conflict with the overall CR-strategy (Muller 2006, 196). The possible overlapping activities or inconsistent communications are impossible to eliminate completely, but they are not seen as problematic, as the issue is so important that all communication that raises awareness of CR issues in general is welcome.

> *"Inevitably there are overlaps; people are reinventing the wheel again, using money and resources to do the same things in different parts. It can't be completely avoided. On the other hand, these things are so important that even overlapping efforts are more beneficial than giving feedback to the local actors that this was already done. After all, their cause is so good." (Manager, Internal communications.)*

> *"When there are thousands of people working, undoubtedly a couple of them are doing the same. It might not even make sense to end it completely, in a way the overlapping things still reflect the local way of communicating." (Director, Environment.)*

Even though resources are used to similar projects, all communication is beneficial and even resembling outputs still have local features. So this possible challenge of localised strategies identified in the literature (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 58–59; Epstein 2008, 86) doesn't seem to be problematic to the companies.

However, in the spirit of Bartlett and Ghoshal's worldwide learning ideal it would seem useful to share ideas, so that successful projects could be reproduced elsewhere. Two of the companies mention having a formal channel for sharing information and best practices between corporate communications personnel in different countries; one is a virtual network and the other a sort of a database for articles and stories.

> *"The purpose of the virtual network is to make the group-level communications plan more transparent and to inform others of what we're doing, and on the other hand also to get information from around the world of people's needs, ideas or best practices." (Director, Internal Communications.)*

The virtual network for example includes marketing and communications personnel and it has been well received, indicating a clear need for this kind of platform. Two other companies mention working towards having a channel for collaboration, and in general the global intranet is also a good channel for getting ideas and sharing best practices. All in all it still seems that companies are not fully embracing the possibilities of learning from each other or actively supporting the information flows from subsidiaries to headquarters (Barin Cruz & Boehe 2010). However, it must be noted that a formal channel doesn't guarantee information sharing, nor does it mean that the companies without formal channels would not share. The respondents might not recognise or even be aware of the informal sharing between colleagues in different countries, yet in a company employing thousands of people around the world it seem obvious informal connections cannot have comprehensive coverage.

4.2 Internal communication on a global scale

The consultants see various reasons why employees and internal communication are crucial for implementing corporate responsibility. Internal communication is the basis for external communication, as the organisation needs to be aware and in line with what is said to the outside world. Principles won't turn into practices until each employee has understood what they mean in his or her job. Employees are also an important channel for external communications.

> *”The internal voice is always the most important one, it is the one that meets clients and partners, and the one that shouts in a bar to his buddies if his employer is good or not.” (Communications consultant.)*

The reputation of a company is not built with pr-campaigns, but in the daily interaction of the employees with clients and other stakeholders, even outside the workplace with informal contacts. That is why employees need to be a priority in implementing corporate responsibility. However, the role of internal communications in influencing employees’ view on responsibility is seen as limited, as the outside world changes people’s opinions more than any one company.

> *“Every person’s own background and culture has the most influence on what corporate responsibility means to them.” (Director, Environment.)*
>
> *”... it’s not about the company’s internal communication, it’s about how time changes, how the media writes about these things and how people adopt new values.” (Manager, CR.)*

The importance of these external sources is also mentioned by Du et al. (2010, 13), as they are often considered more credible sources than the company itself when it comes to CR issues. Society, media and personal contacts shape people’s thoughts.

4.2.1 Channels of internal communication

One of the company representatives points out that internal and external communications are not separate anymore: employees are an important audience for external communication and external stakeholders are interested in the internal management of these issues. This is in line with previous literature (Cornelissen 2008, 195; Welch & Jackson 2007, 180). For example for one company their whole communication focus is on the personnel, and thus for example their corporate responsibility report’s main audience is employees, even though this is a channel which traditionally is considered to be an important part of external communications. Including responsibility issues in the company values is also a way of communicating the importance of CR to the organisation to both external and internal stakeholders, as pointed out by Collier and Esteban (2007, 21).

On a more concrete and practical level, intranet is commonly the most important channel of global communications, often including separate sections for different business areas, countries and even individual plants in addition to the shared, global intranet. This is an indication of the technology-induced change in communication stated also by O’Kane, Hargie & Tourish (2004, 75–76). Other electronic channels mentioned (by one or two companies) are for example e-mail bulletins, electronic learning centre, webcasts and social media. However, locally produced personnel magazines or newsletters are also still common. These different channels are used for different purposes and needs.

> *"Usually when the personnel magazine is read, it is quite thoroughly read." (Director, Internal Communications.)*

Intranet is perhaps the most used and read channel for daily purposes, however, for in-depth stories the personnel magazine can be more influential. Personnel magazines and newsletters are often in printed form and in some companies the electronic products also have for example printable summaries. Only one company consciously has chosen not to do printed magazines for example, as they begun operations at a time when printed publications were already seen as a bit outdated. However, the CR consultant points out that quality printed material can also be a way of showing the importance of CR.

> *"Producing that kind of high-class prints and training material is good and shows appreciation towards the personnel, it shows they're not just thinking that you can read this stuff on the internet." (CR consultant.)*

This and the previous comment suggest printed material would still be more influential and more accessible than intranet. Usually a contrast has been made mainly between face-to-face and all other communication (Barrett 2002, 221; Cornelissen 2008, 196; Juholin 1999, 36), yet this could be a sign that as electronic channels have become mainstream, printed material has reached new respect. This development has also been noted by Smith (2005, 77). The importance of printed material is true at least in factories, where the information needs are different overall. The content is perhaps more practical, and when it comes to CR, the communication includes mostly safety-issues. The communication is more informative and it needs to be quickly read. At best most factory workers only have a few shared computers at their use.

> *"In the factories an important communications channel are posters and such, which you literally bump into when walking down the corridor. They're quite important, even though they might seem a bit irrelevant." (Director, Environment.)*

The respondents themselves believe posters or notice boards are commonly seen as old-fashioned, even though they are of utmost importance. As a slight reformation electronic boards are used as well. These channels reach all workers and they are practically impossible to miss. In addition, many older plants and locations have their set traditions for communication which can be difficult to change, whereas newer facilities are more open to or even prefer new channels like social media sites.

Especially in factories but also in other functions managers' role is important and thus communication from close superiors is highlighted. This is also the employees' preference (Hargie & Tourish 2004, 247). It can be in the form of development discussions, team meetings or by simply setting an example with the way of working.

> *”When we’re talking about more practical introduction, the employee’s own superior and team have an important role. In the discussions with the manager the daily practices and the ways of working are defined, and it has a significant influence. In general we try to invest in both leadership and management.” (Manager, Internal communications.)*

In three of the companies managers are explicitly named as the most important channel of information, especially when it comes to responsibility issues directly related to that particular employee’s tasks. Colleagues and team members are also vital in communicating about practical matters. The communication with colleagues and managers is also inevitable and even compulsory, when compared to for example stories on the intranet or newsletters, which are read or not depending on the employees’ own interests. Thus, it can be said the managers’ role in communication is important, even though Madsen and Ulhøi (2001, 59) found that from the employee perspective superiors and co-workers were generally not a major source of information for environmental issues.

In one company messages from the CEO are described as one of the main factors in successfully communicating about CR to employees.

> *”The CEO has launched the code of conduct with his own face and his own name, and from the very beginning he has addressed the personnel directly about it, written texts to the intranet, and all in all stands by it strongly.” (Manager, CR.)*

The commitment of one influential person can have a remarkable effect, and in this case the CEO has not only talked about CR in general, but has actively participated in several CR-related projects. Even though the CEO (or any other manager) is not a channel per se but merely a communicator or an information source using different means, due to the power and weight of the status in any company, CEO communications could be considered as a separate channel altogether. Epstein (2008, 222) also distinguishes letters from the CEO as a separate channel to communicate about CR issues.

Most of the companies have their own code of conduct and obligatory training is given. To facilitate comparison between companies this training is thus used here as an example of communication channels. There is some variation between the depth of the codes in the companies, as some see the codes as higher level principles and the practical training is given under another name, while others’ code of conducts give elaborate instructions and practical examples of concrete situations. These differences in the content and level of companies’ codes are also noted by Collier and Esteban 2007, 21. Nevertheless, whatever the content, all of the companies see code of conduct –training as extremely important and the methods seem to be similar: in general the companies train employees through an electronic tool or through development discussions. The channel varies within companies also, depending on the location and the position of the employee, for example blue-collar workers might get the training in group meetings when they don't have development discussions or access to a computer.

The code of conduct –training thus also serves as an example for the debate between electronic and personal communication. Agreeing with most of the previous literature (e.g. Barrett 2002; Hargie & Tourish 2004; Smith 2005) the consultants see communication is continuously moving more towards electronic tools and channels, even though they believe face-to-face –communication in most cases is essential for bringing responsibility principles to life.

> *"It would be good not to forget the significance of face-to-face conversations. For example development discussions are a good tool." (CR consultant.)*

Development discussion is only an example, as the consultants again refer to the fact that responsibility issues should not be communicated separately but integrated to weekly meetings, daily discussions etc. When the training is given in person, it allows for more focus on the issues important to that particular audience. On the other hand it can also be more difficult to control and monitor, as the level and focus of the training is in the hands of the manager and no-one can really know what, if any, responsibility issues are talked about. And face-to-face –meetings are not automatically successful either, for example if there are too many participants and it is not brought to a fairly personal level. The company representatives also admit the trend towards electronic communications and its shortcomings.

> *"Even though the electronic tool is not so wonderful, it is used a lot. These tools are constantly more and more internet-related. I believe we have gone to extremes; nothing needs to be said, just 'check it out on the Internet'." (Director, CR.)*

Even though people are not completely satisfied with these methods, they are commonly used, perhaps for the variety of reasons presented by Edmundson (2009, 42): low cost, variety of content, comprehensive use. Especially the older generation might prefer personal communications, whereas younger people are more accustomed and fluently use electronic applications. There are also differences in the way these tools are built, and e-tool isn't always automatically the worse choice.

> *"The world is full of all kinds of digital trainings, and some of them are basically just clicking next-next-next to get rid of the inconvenient task --- But ours is fairly extensive and it has tests you need to pass." (Manager, CR.)*

If it is properly constructed and requires real concentration and involvement from the employee, it can be highly effective. With this kind of a standardised tool you can also make sure everyone receives the same message. In the end, all companies seem to have a combination of both electronic and face-to-face communications. As pointed out earlier, managers are especially important in the practical matters and training, and this can also be seen with the code of conduct. Whether the official training of the principles is given through an electronic application or in development discussions, the practical implications are learned in the actual work and daily communications.

4.2.2 Two-way communication

The consultants believe the top management needs to act accordingly and their actions cannot be in conflict with the official message. They also need to show commitment to CR in the allocation of resources, including training hours for employees. This corresponds to the unanimous stream of literature which also emphasises the role of top management (e.g. Epstein 2008; Ligeti & Oravecz 2009; Watson & Weaver 2003). However, only one of the companies strongly highlights the CEO’s commitment to corporate responsibility. His personal enthusiasm and activity is seen as the major reason why the personnel have also taken the issue to heart. Other companies don’t make any reference to top executives in CR implementation. This doesn’t necessarily mean their executives wouldn’t be involved, but it indicates that executive commitment is not central in their strategies.

However, when it comes to lower-level managers, most of the companies mention the importance of close superiors as communicators. Possibly the level of interest of the manager can have a great impact on the overall understanding of sustainability of the employees, as indicated by Garavan et al. (2010, 592). As the interaction with close superiors is more personal and constant, it is bound to be considered more influential also.

In line with previous studies (e.g. Du et al. 2010; Govindarajulu & Daily 2004), the consultants believe it is essential the employees are included in the process of defining the company’s responsibility strategy if true commitment is to be reached, but they also admit that motivating employees to participate in the process to begin with can be difficult.

> *”Including the employees would seem sensible. How can you internalise something if you are not able to influence it. But it is a question of how to do it: can companies motivate employees to get them excited about participating.” (CR consultant.)*

If the employees are not personally interested in sustainability issues, or if they feel their opinion doesn’t matter anyway, they might lack the motivation to give feedback, a factor also considered by Cornelissen (2008, 199) and Tourish and Hargie (2004, 200). The companies have varying methods of collecting employee input on corporate responsibility policies and practices. All the companies welcome comments and feedback from employees; however, it is not necessarily actively solicited or regularly organised.

> *"Sure, one can e-mail or call or come and talk, of course all ideas are welcome." (Director, CR.)*

A couple of companies suggest employees can approach the top management as they visit facilities and also send e-mail or call to the relevant person. The initiative is left at the hands of the employees, and thus getting feedback might depend on the general organisational culture: if communication is open and employees know they can speak freely to superiors, this model can work. Nevertheless, especially contacting people in much higher ranks can be rare. With close superiors communication can be easier.

> *"It is mostly giving some feedback personally, like this and this doesn't work and this does. It is often very practical." (Manager, CR.)*

Especially practical feedback related to daily tasks is given locally to managers, and one company highlights continuous discussion as a part of their organisational culture. It is also noted by the companies that especially in some hierarchic cultures it can be difficult to get employees to communicate freely to their superiors, a fact recognised also by Smith (2005, 112). Germany and China are mentioned here as typical countries, where employees do not dare to give personal opinions or feedback. One company also highlights the importance of language: as the corporate language is English, most feedback comes from native or fluent English speakers. But it is not always that simple. It is not necessarily a lack of communication per se, but a difference in the way of communicating.

> *"As a matter of fact, the Asians have plenty of ideas; you just have to know how to pick them up. Their way of communicating internally as well is very subtle. ---- it is not necessarily very open." (Director, Environment.)*

Understanding the styles of interaction and communication in different cultures is necessary to be able to pick up the ideas. One solution offered is simply that the manager needs to actively encourage employees to give their opinions. Uusi-Rauva and Nurkka (2010, 310) also suggest managers should actively seek feedback, instead of relying on employee initiative.

In the actual process of defining the content of the company's sustainability only one company explicitly mentions that representatives from all over the world were visited and included. In later stages and in other companies employees are heard for example through materiality reviews for the corporate responsibility report. This review is a clear indication of what is important to the employees in corporate responsibility, but it remains unclear whether these results are used for other purposes than determining the focus of the report.

For general feedback most companies have common and regular channels such as employee satisfaction surveys and the European Works Councils required by law. In many companies employees have been involved in defining the company's values through workshops and intranet surveys, and this seems to be more of a rule than an exception. However, defining company values might not be a sufficient input to defining the company's responsibility policies. Whistle blowing channels are also established, whereby employees can anonymously report suspected misconducts. There are also some isolated surveys, whereby employees might be explicitly asked to share their thoughts on certain issues.

> *"Every employee tells about some small insights, ideas, inventions or thoughts he has had related to work. So basically we have a direct innovation channel from the personnel. --- They can be just everyday observations of how to improve the business or to make it more responsible." (Manager, CR.)*

This is an isolated project, with a specific request made to each employee to participate one way or the other. The responses vary from technical improvements to promoting cycling. Many of the channels and forms of bottom-up communication mentioned might not include much responsibility-related information and also can require a fairly big effort and interest by the employee to share his or her thoughts. The use of these different channels also brings forth a question of whether occasional and purposeful surveys are actually a better way of getting employee attention instead of standardized questionnaires sent out yearly, especially if the employees might receive this kind of requests on different things fairly often.

Scanning through thousands of responses also requires resources and might not prove to be fruitful. One company representative notes that it is not possible or even necessary to include everyone from the start. This kind of resource limitations of big companies to employee involvement has also been noted by Welch and Jackson (2007, 187). There always needs to be some sort of proposition as a starting point and this is then modified together. International and cross-functional workshops are popular, but the selection of participants can be biased and does not necessarily represent the majority.

4.2.3 Content of internal communication

As in the overall corporate strategy, CR communications should not be a separate issue, but an integral part of all communication. This can be seen in all the companies as well. When it comes to articles in the intranet or personnel magazines for example, sustainability is usually present through clients, products or other similar cases and not as a stand-alone issue, as it is a core part of the business.

”Responsibility doesn’t need to be specifically highlighted for example in the personnel magazine. It arises naturally through stories of our activities, products, clients and so on.” (Director, Internal Communications.)

”Environmental solutions are such a central part of our business, that responsibility and sustainable arguments are directly linked to our product sales.” (Manager, Internal communications.)

Due to the nature of their business, for most of the companies especially environmental responsibility is closely linked for example to product information and sales. Some of the companies believe their sustainability communications are actually a bit more inclined to environmental issues, and that more work is needed on the social side. Safety issues also have a big role in the communication and training in production facilities already because of legal requirements, and they can be easily turned into clear guidelines (Chinander 2001, 288). Thus the communication can be fairly practical and work-related.

The content of responsibility communications also depends on the country in question, as different aspects are highlighted. This is seen as completely natural. It is also one of the main reasons local actors can communicate independently, as it is impossible for the headquarters to know what is important in a certain facility at a certain time. According to one company for example in China safety issues are currently important, while in Europe the focus has been on environment for long.

Companies have different ways of instructing their employees: in some issues they rely more on the employees’ own decision-making, while in others they give specific instructions. At times the guidance can even be very specific: for example in one company the marketing department was given a list of words which shouldn’t be used in reference to the sustainability of the products in order not to overstate some issues and thus involuntarily end up green washing or making false claims. The consultants believe many employees would prefer concrete ethical guidelines as the problems are often very complex. Corruption guidelines are used here as an example.

“Where do you set the limit for an acceptable gift: should there be a clearly defined limit in Euros or do you trust people to have the ability to evaluate it themselves case-by-case? I’ve heard that in many companies employees wish for the clear limit, so they don’t need to do the thinking of what is right and what is wrong.” (CR consultant.)

Only one of the companies has set a clear monetary limit for bribery, while a couple of the companies believe it is practically impossible as the differences are so big between countries.

”The price of lunch in Europe can be the monthly salary for example in Vietnam, so it is impossible to set one monetary limit that would fit all.” (Director, CR.)

Whether or not clear limits are given, the companies use practical examples in their training to make it easier for employees to understand the principles and apply them in practice. Training needs to give practical tools for actual situations (Epstein 2008, 203; Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka 2010, 306). The declared principles need to be explained thoroughly.

> *"What does it mean, what is a bribe, what kind of figures are we talking about, and do we walk out of a deal if bribes are needed. We need to have concrete discussions of it." (Director, Communications.)*

In one company for example the code of conduct training includes tests with questions like "what would you do if a business partner offered you a concert and a dinner?" The learning can also happen on a case-by-case –basis, seeing how the manager or colleagues act in a similar situation or by directly asking for guidance in an actual dilemma. For corruption issues as well as in general most respondents make a clear difference between corporate policies and actual employee practices.

> *"The Code of conduct is a typical Way of working –style document, and it is difficult to draw any concrete conclusions of what it means. The bribery discussion is a typical example." (Director, Environment.)*

The codes of conduct have slightly different meaning and content in the companies; for some they are the most important guidelines the employees commit to and base their decisions on, while for others they represent more general policies and the actual content of them is learned in practice or through other type of training. It is difficult to conclude what these wider principles such as UN Global Compact mean in practice, and the employees don't even often run into them.

> *"It is stated in the general corporate responsibility policy, but then again, like most corporate policies, it is probably a fairly distant document to many employees." (Director, Communications.)*
>
> *"It is completely useless to communicate with vague, UN-like sentences such as 'we respect local communities'. These policies and principles are extremely important to many external stakeholders, but to the personnel these don't tell anything." (Manager, CR.)*

The policies can be a part of the corporate identity and as such very important, but employees relate most to the local communication concerning their everyday work. In other words, the communication needs to be fact-based and not too complicated. Everything needs to be practical and concrete, not just rhetoric. As corporate responsibility is a complex and constantly evolving issue, it is not possible or even necessary for all the employees to understand it profoundly. On the other hand, in a growing number of positions and tasks the employees' understanding of sustainability needs to be on a fairly high level, as it is directly related to their work.

”Nowadays it is not just telling the personnel that you must use a helmet and remember these ethical principles. Responsibility issues are increasingly becoming a relevant part of each employee’s actual work.” (Manager, CR.)

Knowing the principles and learning the simple rules is not enough. For example sales people need to be prepared to answer all sorts of questions related to the sustainability of the product and the whole manufacturing process. Understanding and promoting sustainable values is required in many tasks, even if the employee has no personal interest in those particular issues. The need for a more thorough understanding has been recognised in the literature as well, connecting the strategic CR to both the employees’ own tasks (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 176; Collier & Esteban 2007, 26) and to the external environment (Maon et al. 2009, 81; Welch & Jackson 2007, 190).

The CR consultant sees that at times employees can feel responsibility issues are force-fed to them, and it can be difficult to get them involved. When it comes to inspiring and motivating the personnel in corporate responsibility, business-related arguments seem to be most important, even though nowadays people are more and more interested in sustainability as an intrinsic value.

”In the business world it is a fact, that linking responsibility to the business either as savings or profit is a very good motivator to most people.” (Director, Environment.)

”Surely many employees are also inspired by the idea of saving the world, as we are in a business where we can influence great challenges of sustainable development through our solutions and services.” (Manager, Internal communications.)

As the companies have products designed to reduce their clients’ environmental impacts, it is fairly easy to motivate them with ethical arguments. In many comments it is found obvious everyone cares about the environment and social wellbeing, but too much idealism might also clash with the needs of the company.

”Everybody is interested in responsibility issues, that’s for sure. Nobody wants to work in a factory that has problems with safety or uses raw materials recklessly or has big emissions. We wouldn’t even want to employ people like that [who don’t care].” (Director, CR.)

“Business is what we do, and within that frame we aim to do things as sustainably as possible. If you only want to save the world, which is a really nice thought, you might end up having to do something contradicting.” (Director, Communications.)

Previous studies have also found support for both business-case motivation (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka 2010, 308) and moral motivation (Aguilera et al. 2007, 842), but within these companies the financial motivation seems to be more influential. Whatever the motivation, the level of understanding and commitment varies. Sometimes there can be a profound change in behaviour, but it can also merely cause pressure to keep up to date or comply with corporate guidelines without provoking personal interest to the matter. Somewhat conversely, the communications consultant believes internal communications can and should change employees' behaviour outside of the workplace as well, if it is truly effective and properly understood.

> *"If at home you're acting very differently than at work --- it makes one wonder, if the communication about responsibility has made any difference." (Communications consultant.)*

Corporate responsibility needs to be adopted at a personal level as well.

4.2.4 Tailoring internal communication

The consultants say international companies need to communicate as consistently as possible, but in reality some modifications are necessary. The companies stress, that the message needs to be uniform and the same guidelines apply everywhere. For this reason certain principles such as the code of conduct are common to all employees around the world, and these cannot be modified in the translation.

> *"For responsibility issues, I think it is important that all employees around the world in all jobs know the company values and also the code of conduct as a more detailed guideline, because these form the basis for decision-making in daily operations." (Manager, Internal communications.)*

A shared set of rules is important, but the same message can be interpreted in various ways by different people, even within the same culture and with a common language. Even with the help of explanations and examples people might get different impressions. This is further complicated when cultural differences and language barriers are taken into consideration.

> *"Even our top management can interpret this value differently. That is completely natural, as they come from around the world, from Asia, USA and Central Europe. Words just don't mean the same things. It is absolutely impossible to have a perfectly uniform message in this area [CR]." (Director, Environment.)*

The creators of the message are thinking of one thing and the person receiving it another. One company had a created a safety training video for global use. The video was seen realistic for example in Finland and China, but feedback from Central Europe deemed it too brutal and sad, hoping for a happier ending. This kind of differences in perspective is something that must be accepted. And when the message is tailored, the more people are in the chain, the more the original message and purpose might get transformed. But it seems a strong effort is made to obtain a shared understanding through a combination of global and local communications and original and translated material.

The code of conduct and related training are translated and organised in all or most of the companies' languages, seemingly due to the importance of the message. The global intranet is commonly only in English, although the companies have various local alternatives as well, for example local sections with both own information and translations for most important articles and so on. The intranet can even have building-specific sites, and these sections are managed locally. In a couple of the companies the personnel magazines are in a few main languages, whereas in others the magazines or newsletters can be even location-specific and thus they are done in the local language and from local perspective. To put it in another way, the main principles need to be in all languages, but they are merely translated as the message cannot change. As using a foreign language can be a hindrance for learning (Luo & Shenkar 2006, 323), translations to all possible languages is used for the most central messages. The intranet is mainly in English, but most important issues are also translated at least to the main languages. Local intranet sections and locally managed personnel magazines are not translated but produced from the needs of the local facilities. Also, translations can be checked or even made with local personnel to ensure the message is clear and understandable in the way it was meant to be understood. Local people are the only ones who can truly understand all the different nuances and references of the target language (Smith 2005, 111). This way the global message is interpreted to the local level.

The concept of local can be ambiguous, as companies can have various sites within the same country, and in bigger countries cultural differences are large between regions and for example between rural and urban people. For example in China even the local employees don't know the history and unwritten rules of interaction between different villages.

A couple of companies emphasise a global starting point, in which case there is not even a need for cultural modifications as the original message is designed to suit all audiences. For example the communications team has members from all over the world, and ideas are tossed around to make sure there are no cultural problems before publishing anything. Multicultural participation in projects also ensures people are accustomed to taking several cultures into consideration in their communications.

> *"When you have a global organisation that works in a matrix and the projects involve people from several offices, in a way all issues are shared. We have very little activities that would be purely local." (Director, Communications.)*

This kind of global starting point fits well with the transnational/geocentric management strategy of Bartlett and Ghoshal, combining standardisation and localisation and also supporting the fluent flow of information to all directions. Working in multicultural teams is probably normal for all companies, yet at least in the bigger ones purely local functions are necessary as well. And blue-collar workers for one don’t often have contact with colleagues from abroad or participate in global communications. The different translation needs are thus also related to the different information needs of the personnel.

> *”The white-collar-workers speak English everywhere, they wouldn't be hired if they didn’t, it’s a requirement.” (Director, CR.)*

White-collar workers mostly speak English and can therefore follow for example the global intranet, whereas blue collar workers might not speak English or even have regular access to computers. Thus the printed materials are more locally produced, and might include more practical information. Again, the respondents highlight that responsibility training is important to all employees, yet they agree that for the overall compliance for example managers’ training is more crucial. Realistically, the training depends on the position and function of the employee.

> *”It’s not that the code of conduct wouldn’t be relevant to all, but of course in some jobs the actions of the employee don’t necessarily have a direct influence to whether or not the overall compliance is reached. It depends on what level you’re working at, what kind of tasks… with executives and managers it’s quite important to go through it [the code of conduct].” (Director, Environment.)*

As managers are seen as one of the most important communication channel to employees, it is obvious they need to be properly trained as they pass this information on through their example or guidance. The focus on front-line employees is also supported by Govindarajulu and Daily (2004, 366–367). Another group that might benefit from more training are the sales and purchase departments.

> *”… people in purchasing and sales that do the fieldwork, as they have a lot of contact to clients. The supply chain and partnerships are often just as important as the company itself for implementing responsibility.” (CR consultant.)*

The companies acknowledge employees should be trained specifically on the issues important to their work. However, this focusing is not necessarily done in separate responsibility trainings but as a part of the normal training and communication to the tasks in general. For example the ethical guidelines for purchasing can be one section of the general criteria for supply chain management. This supports the holistic view of corporate responsibility integration.

Even though the principles, guidelines and the rules are the same around the world, the focus in projects and communications can vary locally. Thus each place highlights different aspects of CR, depending on the culture and the current issues in it.

> *”Different things are highlighted naturally in different parts of the world. In a multicultural company it is a fact that needs to be accepted.” (Director, Environment.)*

These issues can be general, like concentration on environmental issues, or very specific, such as AIDS in South Africa. In general all of the companies seem to be strong in environmental responsibility and face their biggest challenges in social and stakeholder issues. Latin America is used as a reference point to get examples of local features, but the companies have not noted much remarkable specialties. One view is that when operating in areas such as Latin America, the biggest challenges are not necessarily the local problems per se, but taking into consideration and managing the Western stakeholder expectations which can be very specific. Language can also be a problem as English is not commonly spoken. Corporate responsibility issues are so delicate that they need to be communicated in the local language.

In Latin American countries community involvement is much more common than for example in Finland. One respondent claims we could actually learn a lot from them as for example Brazilian companies are very advanced in CR. As the society there is somewhat underdeveloped, companies have historically had an important role in the form of community projects as well as providing activities and facilities to employees. Similar community work is common also for example in the USA.

> *”You can go to a nursing home to read, clean up the neighbourhood or something similar. The society is very receptive to this kind of work. ---- In Finland people wouldn’t see this as the most natural way of helping.” (Communications consultant.)*

Smith (2005, 83) also claims community work to be the most visible and possibly involving way of demonstrating corporate responsibility to employees, however, this has been written in the British context. In Finland the public services are deemed so advanced that this kind of active voluntary work as part of corporate activities might not be well received on neither ends. Corporate responsibility altogether doesn’t create strong feelings in Western countries. Employees in developing countries are much more excited about responsibility issues than in Europe, and Europeans might even seem a bit spoilt.

> *”People are very enthusiastic in the factories in India, China and Brazil… Europeans are like grinches, nothing is enough and everybody has gotten used to having things too well.” (Director, CR.)*
>
> *”In countries where the society has a smaller role companies are able to make a bigger difference in the community. There are more ideas be-*

cause the problems are also diverse, and perhaps in countries like Brazil it is thus easier to get excited of the company's CR projects." (Manager, Internal communications.)

Western expectations are higher, and companies can find it hard to create activities and improvements to meet them. In countries like Brazil where the problems are bigger, there are also more possibilities to make a difference, and the personnel is more involved as the projects can be of personal interest as well. For example building a football court in the neighbourhood benefits the community as a whole but also the company workers. Also, at least in newer facilities with fresh employees it is easier to build systems and structures for different responsible practices. People are more receptive to training and for example safety instructions, as there are no hindering traditions of doing things "the way they have always been done".

4.3 Challenges and best practices in the process

The CR consultant and the companies talk in similar lines: the content of corporate responsibility and the role of companies in sustainability are in constant discussion. Educating employees is a long process and constantly new issues emerge which need to be considered.

Determining if the CR communication has been successful is difficult. Visits to facilities can easily help uncover the biggest problems and the messages from the whistleblower channel are also an indication of the level of compliance. Some responsibility indicators are also linked to regular internal audits of other sectors and the normal indicators used in corporate responsibility reporting are a clear sign of how well the message has been understood.

"When you visit a site, you can see it right away if these [code of conduct] have been addressed or not." (Director, Environment.)

"We report all our emissions, we report all accidents happened at factories… --- These serve as indicators as well of if our work has been successful or not, if the personnel has understood these issues." (Manager, CR.)

If the employees don't act according to the house rules, it will show in the overall responsibility of the company indicating the need for improvements also in communication and training. However, the reality is that not everything can be controlled by the company. There are bound to be some individuals who do not conform to the company values, but the respondents are confident that these will eventually be detected. In a big company you can never be sure that everyone is honest and open and problems are bound to occur. One can only hope the matters come to light and they can be addressed accordingly.

> *"If you think of how many countries we operate in and in how many locations even within different countries ---- obviously we can't be sure that all the information flows fluently, that everything would be open and honest."(Manager, CR.)*
>
> *"It involves a lot of human factors and choices made by individuals. There are plenty of issues that you can never fully prevent with instructions or such." (Manager, Internal communications.)*

Some incidents occur even regardless of any human actions, and no amount of training and instructing is able to prevent everything.

The biggest challenges explicitly named by the respondents reflect different aspects of same things. Responsibility is seen in such different ways around the world, that it is impossible to get a fully consistent message through to all. Even the top management and people within the same culture can interpret the message differently. To make sure local practices correspond to the global principles, the communication needs to be simple, fact-based and give concrete solutions to actual problems.

> *"Maybe it's exactly that, giving answers to concrete questions. ---- Because anyone can write these fancy principles, but then sometimes the actual practices can be quite far from them."(Director, Communications.)*

Even with clear training and instructions, the end results depend a lot on the individual interests and voluntary activity of the employees. Obeying rules is not necessarily enough, and getting employees to internalise the principles can face resistance.

Companies feel their success in getting employees aboard corporate responsibility is mostly due to having sustainability as a natural foundation of all operations from the beginning. Environmental responsibility is not only a consideration of the impacts of own operations, but an important part of the end-products.

> *"Activities based on sustainable development bring us business and we're good at that. This kind of environmental responsibility has been with us for long, and it has been easy to build on that." (Manager, Internal communications.)*

Sustainability is part of the products and solutions, so there is also a lot to communicate about and it is considered business-as-usual. This way it is an integrated part of all communication and not a separate department in the company. Sustainability is thus also naturally important to the employees, as it combines both CR and business interests. For one company being Finnish is also a good starting point, as the reputation is good to begin with and honesty and following regulations are important. Responsible companies attract responsible employees, and a part of this is the treatment of employees.

> *”Of course it is also important, how the company treats its personnel: is it a good company to work in, where people are treated fairly and they have opportunities to learn. In many countries X is probably a desired employer.”(Manager, Internal communications.)*

Respect for personnel can also be seen in prioritising them in CR communication and in including them in the definition of values or responsibility.

One company says CEO commitment is the main thing why employees have taken the issue seriously.

> *”The corporate responsibility messages are not coming from an isolated department of experts, but directly from the CEO. The CEO doesn’t say ‘listen to them over there’, he says the message himself. He is personally committed and knowledgeable.” (Manager, CR.)*

Corporate responsibility issues are more and more integrated to the actual tasks of the employees, and this is true for the CEO as well. He needs to have a comprehensive view, and as the ultimate superior shared by all employees globally, his messages have a far and important reach.

The main challenge, different interpretations of responsibility and global messages, also has a possible solution. Multicultural projects can produce understanding, as different nationalities share their point of view and even basic terms are defined together.

> *”We had a team of 14 people plus commentators from all around the world, and we needed to determine ----- what does it mean when we talk about stakeholder analysis, what does stakeholder even mean to begin with. These kinds of tasks are actually the most useful, but they take a whole lot of time.” (Director, Environment.)*

Even though globally consistent messages and interpretations are impossible, shared understanding is needed. In order to communicate successfully with or to people from other cultures, it is necessary to listen and learn from them as well. Defining a term or deciding a suitable word is not just a linguistic process, it is creating a common frame of reference.

4.4 Internal communication of corporate responsibility issues in the multinational company

The results of the analysis can now be compared to the original framework, fitting different aspects of internal communication to central and local management needs (Figure 3). This is merely a short synthesis of how the corporate practices correspond to the original theoretical framework and a more detailed discussion can be found in the conclusions. The companies have varying management models, yet similarities can be detected as well. Here the general picture is described, but each company has their own set of methods so none of them fit this description perfectly.

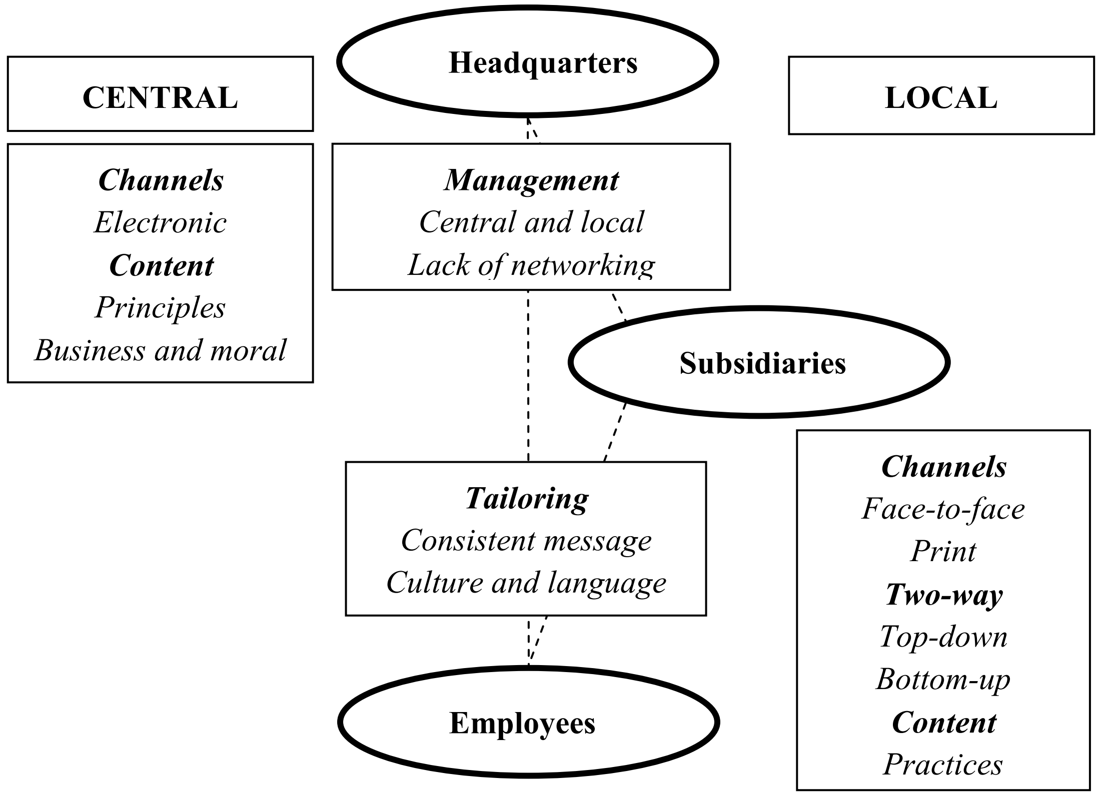

Figure 3 Elements of internal communication of responsibility issues in the multinational company

It appears companies use both central and local management strategies for the communication of different kind of responsibility issues. Coordination is scarce, as the central communication seems fairly standardised and local communication is very independent. Formal structures for networking and sharing knowledge are only found in a couple of companies.

Centrally organised communication relies mostly on electronic channels, namely the intranet, as it is an easy way to reach practically the whole organisation. The content if focused on the bigger picture, telling the employees about the main guidelines and principles directing corporate responsibility and also motivating people by connecting the company's CR to the strategy and external changes. It seems both business and moral motivations can be appealing.

Locally the companies communicate more face-to-face, as managers are often extremely important sources of information. This communication is often very practical and shows the employees how to apply the corporate guidelines in their work, bringing them to a practical level. Print media is mostly used locally for site-specific communication. Two-way communication also seems to work better on the local level. Executive commitment is not generally mentioned, whereas close managers are considered important. Bottom-up communication for responsibility issues rarely has any specific channel, and it seems feedback is not actively sought. Upward communication is also easier in the local context, giving ideas of practical issues to the closest managers.

When it comes to tailoring communications, keeping the message consistent is a priority. As much of the communication is in local hands, it is created for local needs from the beginning. Central communication is translated in most cases to only the company's main languages, and this can be done in cooperation with the locals. Altogether there is not much need for tailoring, as locals can communicate fairly independently.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to study how companies implement corporate responsibility through internal communication on a global scale. The purpose was further divided into the following sub objectives:

- How is the internal communication on corporate responsibility organised by the company internationally?
- How do companies communicate on responsibility issues with their employees?
- What kind of challenges and best practices can be identified in the process?

International companies are likely to be organised in complex, matrix structures with both global and local responsibilities and power. In this case the focus is on a simplified view of a detailed combination of functions: internal communication related to corporate responsibility. The basis for the study is the different typologies created by Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) and Heenan and Perlmutter (1979), which ultimately combines to an ideal organisation: transnational or geocentric. This organisation has a global mindset, merging the benefits of both standardisation and local responsiveness through networking and common learning between subsidiaries.

One could assume that surely most MNCs by now have adopted this strategy by necessity, and to certain point it might be true. Still this strategy might be more visible in the corporate statements than in the actual practices of the companies. The companies studied here have both strong central and independent local activities, yet in a way they seem fairly multidomestic, leaving it all to the locals as long as they're doing fine (Heenan & Perlmutter 1979). It is agreed that local people are the only ones capable of responding to local needs, and so they shouldn't be directed or managed from the headquarters. It is as if though by supporting local independence the companies are trying to avoid the western imperialist image presented by Morse (2008). On the other hand, the companies feel that local communications are very well in line with the general corporate message, so it can be assumed messages from the headquarters have been listened and understood. Local independence does not necessarily mean the subsidiary's CR agenda would be in conflict with the overall CR-strategy (Muller 2006, 196). Then again, standardisation is also used for communicating about the main principles and guidelines which need to be consistent and clear to all.

Also, even though the attitude is very global and in general many activities involve people from different locations, the group-level teams seem to be dominated by Finnish personnel. Only one company has a multicultural team at the headquarters level to respond to CR and communications issues, allowing for the communications to be fitted to different cultural needs from the very beginning, thus possibly reducing the need for tailoring and the possibility of misunderstandings. If local viewpoints are truly respected, they should be involved already at the group-level.

The companies probably have plenty of informal contacts and networking which allows for local people to contribute to the overall strategy and to improve coordination, yet in organisations with thousands of employees this might not be enough. Literature suggests possible challenges of decentralisation such as inconsistencies or duplication of activities (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 58–59; Epstein 2008, 86; Huemer 2010, 265), but the companies do not see these as big problems, even if they do occur to some extent. This again indicates that despite local independence the central coordination is sufficient. Systematic and formal channels for sharing information within CR communications seem to be scarce still, but many companies are at least planning to create such networks. The ones who already have this kind of channels believe they are useful and needed. There are great benefits of learning and actively supporting the information flows from subsidiaries to headquarters (Barin Cruz & Boehe 2010), but all in all it still seems that companies are not fully embracing these possibilities, especially considering the cooperation between different subsidiaries. Currently the intranet can be used to learn from others.

Intranet is a good channel for globally shared communications reaching the majority of employees. However, there are indications that printed material could be more influential and in some cases more accessible than intranet, gaining new respect as electronic channels have become mainstream (Smith 2005, 77). Still the most valued channel seems to be face-to-face communication, which is most often visible through managerial communication, obviously on the local scale. These findings are supported by previous studies by Barrett (2002, 221) and Hargie and Tourish (2004, 247). It cannot be said which channel would be best. When inadequately designed and implemented, both face-to-face and electronic channels can fail, and at best both have indisputable benefits and can be the correct tool for a specific purpose. In the end, companies seem to have a combination of both electronic and face-to-face communications, and different channels are used for different purposes and needs. Managers communicate on the practical issues, whereas written channels serve for more general or abstract matters.

The companies see a difference between corporate policies and actual employee practices. Policies can be so general and vague that their implications are hard to grasp, thus employees relate most to the practical communication concerning their everyday work. However, literature suggests both practical and more profound understanding is required from employees (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 176; Epstein 2008, 203; Maon et al. 2009, 81; Welch & Jackson 2007, 190). This is partly supported by the companies, as they acknowledge that sustainability has become a central part of many employees' tasks but also believe, that as the issues are constantly evolving and changing, a profound understanding is not even possible. There are conflicting views regarding the level of guidance: some believe very concrete guidelines need to be given, others think it is not possible as the context are so different around the world and thus employees need to learn to apply principles to practice themselves.

When it comes to inspiring and motivating the personnel in corporate responsibility, business-related arguments seem to be most important, even though nowadays people are more and more interested in sustainability as an intrinsic value. With these companies the motives are easily linked, as most have products directly contributing to sustainable development. Their internal communication is thus naturally inclined to environmental aspects.

Literature suggests another important point in motivating the personnel is to involve it in defining the company's CR strategy (Govindarajulu & Daily 2004; Tourish & Hargie 2004, 189–190; Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka 2010, 310). For example corporate values are generally defined through a process involving employees, but for purely CR-related issues it doesn't seem to be that common. All the companies say they welcome comments and feedback from employees; however, it is not necessarily actively solicited or regularly organised, and the initiative is left at the hands of the employees. Especially in some hierarchic cultures it can be difficult to get employees to communicate freely to their superiors. Uusi-Rauva and Nurkka (2010, 310) suggest managers should actively seek feedback, instead of relying on employee initiative.

In addition to bottom-up communication, also top-down communication is considered important by most authors (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989, 204; Epstein 2008, 50; Watson & Weaver 2003, 80). However, only one company states CEO commitment as a central element of their CR-strategy. The importance of managers in general is recognised, but the findings suggest top executives remain in the background when it comes to leading the company's CR programme.

The companies stress that the same ethical guidelines apply everywhere and therefore the message needs to be consistent around the world. A shared set of rules is important, but the same message can be interpreted in various ways by different people, complicated by cultural differences and language barriers. To reach a shared understanding, communication can be adapted to local needs. Main principles such as the code of conduct are merely translated, and minimum adaptation is allowed to keep the message uniform, whereas some communication is fully produced by the local staff independently. All companies probably aim for their communication to suit different audiences to begin with, but only in one company this is supported by a multicultural team on the group-level.

Using a foreign language can be a barrier to learning and understanding (Chang 2009; Luo & Shenkar 2006, 323), and this can be noted from the companies' language practices as well. The most central and important communication is translated to all possible languages or at least to all main languages to ensure compliance. More practical and local communication is often produced from the needs of the local facilities naturally with the native tongue. Also, translations are made or at least checked with local personnel to ensure the message is clear and understandable in the way it was meant to be understood.

Subsidiaries can also tailor the content of the CR programme to the surrounding society. Each place highlights different aspects of CR, depending on the culture and the current issues in it. In countries where the society is underdeveloped, the company has more possibilities to do good and thus it is also easier to get the employees involved and excited, as the CR projects can directly benefit their own community. In general all of the companies seem to be strong in environmental responsibility and face their biggest challenges in social and stakeholder issues.

Companies feel their success in getting employees aboard corporate responsibility is mostly due to having CR as a natural foundation for business, as sustainability is part of the products and solutions. Mentioned are also for example the fair treatment of employees and being and honest and obedient Finnish company. These can maybe be linked to having a reputation as a responsible company. A responsible company attracts responsible employees, and sustainable values are perhaps deeply embedded to the corporate culture, thus also enforcing responsible behaviour in the employees.

The biggest challenge is the obvious: how to reach a shared understanding. Responsibility is seen in such different ways around the world, that it is impossible to get a fully consistent message through to all. It is difficult to translate global principles to concrete actions on the local level, and make the communication simple and fact-based with concrete solutions to actual problems. Shared understanding requires intercultural participation and discussion, listening and learning. This goes back to the transnational/geocentric strategy which supports the flow of information to all directions, allowing for worldwide learning.

5.1 Theoretical contribution and managerial implications

By combining several theories, this study brings new aspects to all of the involved streams of literature, for example studying internal communication from an international perspective and relating management strategies to corporate responsibility. It has both supported and challenged previous findings. Not surprisingly, the research also confirms that many issues in international corporate responsibility still require further discussion.

This research can help managers identify the challenges and benefits of the process. The results could help companies to better plan and implement their employee training and communications, and ultimately to better carry out their general CR principles.

Comparing the findings to previous literature and recommendations, companies could place more consideration to the use of different channels and language decisions to fit the needs of the audience. A definite improvement could be made in the field of two-way communication, by actively seeking employee feedback on responsibility issues as well as getting the executive management to be the forerunner in CR.

A central part of this study is the networking aspect of Bartlett and Ghoshal's transnational strategy. It seems the CR strategy has been consistently understood throughout the companies' subsidiaries, yet they could still benefit from sharing ideas, experiences and best practices not only towards the headquarters but also among each other. Companies could for example try and apply Chaudhri's (2006, 40) four strategies for combining global and local CR strategies.

5.2 Suggestions for further research

As this study has been made from a strategic, managerial point of view, it would be beneficial to see the other side of the story through the employee perspective. A single case study could also be possible, following the actual process in one company in its different locations from headquarters to the employee, analysing also the actual communication material used in companies. A quantitative approach could also be adopted, in order to have a more general picture of different practices regarding for example organisation structures, internal communication channels or language decisions in MNCs.

The study aimed to focus on the Latin American context, yet it seems Finnish companies are not yet so strongly settled that extensive examples could be provided. This area could also merit further investigation. Altogether, as this study only included Finnish companies, comparative studies between companies from different countries could reveal new aspects.

As already mentioned in the introduction, the issue at hand could be further studied with the help of different theories of for example employee involvement or empowerment, organisational structure, cultural differences, subsidiary and headquarter –relations and stakeholder theory. Especially the networking aspect could be studied within knowledge transfer or sharing.

6 SUMMARY

Multinational companies face increasing pressure to act responsibly by taking into consideration their stakeholders' expectations and the impacts of their actions to the surrounding society, including economical, social and environmental issues. This responsibility is only reached through the actions of the company's employees, and thus the ethical guidelines of the company need to be communicated clearly to the personnel. In multinational companies people from different cultures have very varying perceptions of ethics and responsibility, and the same message can thus be interpreted differently depending on the receiver's own background. To make their main ethical guidelines understood, companies may need to plan and tailor their internal communication to fit the needs of different cultural audiences. From here rises the purpose of the research: to study how companies implement corporate responsibility through internal communication on a global scale. The purpose was further divided into the following sub objectives:

- how is the internal communication on corporate responsibility organised by the company internationally
- how do companies communicate with their employees on responsibility issues
- what kind of challenges and best practices can be identified in the process.

Literature suggests the ideal company would combine global standardisation and localisation, allowing for local independence with the help of central coordination and also promoting information flows between subsidiaries. It would use different communication channels according to the needs of the audience and the message, and provide clear and concrete guidelines for ethical conduct as well as linking corporate responsibility to a wider context. It would motivate the employees with both financial and moral arguments. The company would benefit from two-way communication: corporate responsibility requires both management commitment and employee involvement. Cultural aspects would be considered in the communication by language and translation decisions as well as using locally produced materials.

The research was conducted as a qualitative case study by interviewing group-level representatives of five Finnish multinationals with operations in Latin America on their processes and practices regarding the issue. The findings suggest companies have both central and local communication regarding responsibility issues, even though local communication is perhaps slightly highlighted. In a couple of companies there are some indications of formal networking. Central communication relies mostly on electronic channels and focuses on the main principles directing corporate responsibility and also motivating people by connecting the company's responsibility activities to the strategy. Locally the communication is more face-to-face, as managers are important in bringing the guidelines to a practical level. Commitment of executive management is not generally specified, and formal channels for employee feedback on responsibility issues are not common. When it comes to tailoring communications, keeping the message consistent is a given. As much of the communication is in local hands, it is created for local needs from the beginning. Central communication is translated in most cases to only the company's main languages, and this can be done in cooperation with the locals.

The study indicates that even though the local subsidiaries can communicate quite freely, the message remains consistent and coordination from the headquarters seems sufficient. However, companies could benefit from more formal structures that support sharing ideas, experiences and practices among subsidiaries. This could also help support the globally consistent message and consider more cultural diversity already in the initial group-level communication. Electronic channels have become mainstream, but face-to-face communication is still highly valued and printed material is starting to reach new respect. Executive commitment to corporate responsibility is needed, as the head of the company is the ultimate combining manager to the whole global personnel. Especially in hierarchic cultures companies should more actively solicit feedback from employees on responsibility issues. Corporate responsibility in the core of the business facilitates the implementation process. The main challenge has to do with the cultural differences; even with a shared language the meanings are not necessarily shared.

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