3 Corporate social responsibility for whom?
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Introduction

The interest in the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the discourses of academics and practitioners has been rapidly increasing over recent decades. Much of the early literature on CSR aimed to specify the concept and the various components of CSR as it emerged in the early part of the 20th century (Kolk, 2012). The definition of CSR in the early literature is quite general and does not name the specific parties to whom corporations are supposed to be socially responsible. Bowen, whose work was considered as the beginning of the modern era of CSR, and who was also named as the Father of CSR (Carroll, 1999), defined CSR as “the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society” (Bowen, 1953, p. 6).

Following Bowen’s work in 1953, various scholars have attempted to revisit and refine the meaning of CSR and, generally, have come to a consensus that corporations have certain responsibilities to society. However, in the 1970s, in an effort to refine the meaning of CSR, Harold Johnson introduced the term multiplicity of interests and actually names several of these specific interests (groups) (Carroll, 1999). Johnson (1971) states that “a socially responsible firm is one whose managerial staff balances a multiplicity of interests. Instead of striving only for larger profits for its stockholders, a responsible enterprise also takes into account employees, suppliers, dealers, local communities and the nation” (p. 50). Hence, Johnson recognised six different groups of stakeholder altogether, in addition to stockholders, namely, employees, suppliers, dealers, local communities, and the nation. According to Carroll (1999), the recognition of the multiplicity of interests by Johnson hints at the possibility of a stakeholder approach in the implementation of the CSR agenda by corporations. Similarly, Jones (1980), in defining CSR, emphasised the need to extend the responsibilities of corporations beyond the traditional duty to shareholders to other social groups, such as customers, employees, suppliers, and neighbouring communities. Through their works (Johnson, 1971; Jones, 1980), other stakeholders, namely, employees, suppliers, dealers, local/neighbouring communities, and the nation, are highlighted as the parties to be considered by corporations besides shareholders in their business decisions and actions.


