

CHAPTER 8

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to develop indicators for corporate social performance in South Africa. The literature review covered in Chapter 2 to 6 did not reveal specific indicators generally accepted in South Africa. There is however a growing awareness of the need to develop indicators that can offer practical guidelines to the business sector in its pursuit of becoming good corporate citizens. This does not exclude or negate the existence of frameworks and guidelines developed by local and international institutions such as the African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC) and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). The aim of the study however rather focuses on basic, generic and generally accepted indicators which reflects the uniqueness of the SA landscape, and strongly supports practical application by the corporate sector ranging from small/medium enterprises to multinationals operating in South Africa.

Formal research in South Africa in the field of corporate citizenship is limited. Furthermore, although increasingly the preferred term used more generally is “corporate citizenship”, it can still be regarded as a new term in a field that is in need of further research locally. This study introduces an even “newer” term “corporate social performance”, which attempts to reveal more specific measurement criteria or indicators that could benefit not only the corporate sector, but certainly society as a whole. The need was therefore identified to pursue an in-depth exploration and analysis as well as experimentation in the field of corporate social performance. This study therefore falls in the exploratory, qualitative research domain focusing on an in-depth literature review on the topic combining in-depth interviews with leading SA authorities in the field of corporate citizenship.

Due to the contemporary nature of this field as well as its contextuality in the South African business landscape, any data gathered through qualitative or quantitative research design can be regarded as rich data. The decision to follow the qualitative methodology was based purely on the scarcity of both existing research and leading experts in the field.

It was therefore decided to conduct in-depth interviews with 15 leading South African experts in the field of corporate citizenship (refer to 8.4.3. for a detailed description and selection of participants). Their opinions were solicited through a semi-structured interview comprising five open-ended questions. The responses obtained can certainly be regarded as rich data that

needed to be enhanced and preserved. The qualitative methodology to a large extent ensured this but also ensured that the data was contextually maintained. Debating of the topic takes place almost on a daily basis not only locally and internationally, but also on levels associated with policy issues and the global practice of corporate citizenship. It is therefore imperative to maintain data contextuality, and by doing this critically analysing the responses to the questions of the participants.

It is generally accepted that the corporate citizenship landscape is changing rapidly. With the emergence of global policy frameworks and guidelines as well as high level debates on regulatory practices locally and internationally, the need to capture critical SA perspectives and opinions was seen as an important impetus in shaping the future of organisational behaviour. The decision to follow the qualitative methodology can be seen as the more difficult option, but as reported in the above paragraphs, a high premium is placed on preserving the richness of data solicited through in-depth interviews specifically in a timeframe characterised by a rapidly changing landscape.

Chapter 8 will explain qualitative research design in more detail. Chapter 8 will also elaborate on the content analysis methodology that will be followed in analysing the interview data. A description of the in-depth interview questions, as well as the participants, and the selection process that was followed in identifying the participants, will also be offered.

8.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

8.2.1 Defining qualitative research

To define qualitative research it is important to critically view the quantitative methodology in brief. Critics of empirical research (for example Blalock 1991; Willer and Willer 1973) focused their criticisms on the deductive nature of the quantitative process and the preoccupation which researchers supporting the quantitative process have with statistical analysis to the detriment of quality data production (Janesick 1998). They claim that this narrow approach forces researchers to work within theory, rather than challenge or extend it.

As reported in section 8.1 of this chapter, the field of corporate social performance can be regarded as a relatively new field. It is therefore imperative to challenge viewpoints and opinions on the field due to its rapid development and continuous change in character. It is also important to extend the known boundaries of the field which can only be done effectively through qualitative methodology.

Supporters of qualitative research design (for example Layder 1993; Piore 1983; Stainback and Stainback 1988; Strauss 1987 and Corbin 1990) identify the tasks of qualitative research “to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known” or gain novel and fresh slants on things about which quite a bit is already known”. They also claim that “qualitative methods can give the intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods”. This for example indicates the usefulness of qualitative data in interpreting quantitative findings. Supporters of a qualitative approach claim that a deductive methodology constrains researchers without current theory, whereas an inductive method encourages theory development or theory extension.

It is with the above arguments in mind that the decision was made to follow the qualitative approach. Developing indicators for corporate social performance in South Africa can be seen as new theory development. The current framework and guidelines on corporate citizenship, hence corporate social performance, will be extended in so far as integrating the current perspectives through qualitative research on critical indicators, contextualized within the South African business landscape.

Janesick (1998), in his book Stretching exercises for qualitative researchers referred to Eisner’s (1991) well-known features of qualitative study as the framework that is critical for any qualitative study to comply with. These features are:

- Qualitative studies are field focused.
- They rely on the self as research instrument.
- They are interpretive in character.
- They rely on the use of expressive language and the presence of voice in the text.
- They attend to particulars.
- They become believable and instructive because of their coherence, insight, and instrumental utility.

The in-depth interviews that were conducted we recorded and transcribed into a rich text format. The qualitative interpretation (see content analysis, section 8.3.) will be done in an accessible, informal, narrative style and in ordinary language to solicit key groupings of coherent data that have explicit meaning and relate to an indicator of corporate social performance. This “informal” reporting style has certain advantages (Janesick 1998):

- It disrupts what some have called academic writing, which not only distances the reader from what is written, but also denigrates the readers' experience.
- It educates and engages the reader, who may not, until now, have had an interest in qualitative research.
- It inspires the reader to go further and read the writings on theory and practice in qualitative research.
- It demystifies the research process by the use of ordinary language and thereby opens up the pool of researchers in the specific field.
- It democratises the research process. Qualitative research techniques open up the process of research to many more researchers, which in the case of this study is critically needed.

The following table (Table 8.1) presents a summary of differences in quantitative and qualitative research (Jarret 1996).

	Particularistic defined by variables studied	Holistic
Orientation	Verification	Discovery
Data	Objective	Subjective
Instrumentation	Non-human	Human
Conditions	Controlled	Naturalistic

3.2.2 Rationale for qualitative research

As reported in previous paragraphs of this chapter, for the purpose of developing critical indicators for corporate social performance, qualitative research design offers the most appropriate methodology in reaching the stated research objective. If one compares the qualitative paradigm (Table 5.1) in an attempt to defend the decision of following qualitative research design, the following rationale emerges:

- A fundamental understanding is needed of the key drivers of corporate social performance in the SA context. According to the researcher, the current frameworks and guidelines (e.g. AICG and GRI) relate to specific objectives with limited contextualisation within the SA context.

Table 8.1: Qualitative vs Quantitative research (Source: Jarret 1996)

DIMENSIONS	QUANTITATIVE PARADIGM	QUALITATIVE PARADIGM
Purpose reliability	Prediction and control, stable reality is made up of facts that do not change	Understanding dynamic reality changes with changes in people's perceptions
Viewpoint	Outsider reality is what quantifiable data indicate it to be	Insider reality is what people perceive it to be
Values	Value-free values can be controlled	Value-bound values will impact on understanding the phenomena
Focus	Particularistic defined by variables studied	Holistic
Orientation	Verification	Discovery
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- A fundamental understanding is needed of the key drivers of corporate social performance in the S A context. According to the researcher, the current frameworks and guidelines (e.g. AICC and GRI) relate to specific objectives with limited contextualisation within the SA context.

- The field of corporate citizenship and corporate social performance is dynamic. In the advent of a changing socio-political and socio-economical SA landscape, for example Employment Equity and Black Economic Empowerment, to name but two, reality changes resulting in people's perceptions changing. Political power and economic prosperity leading to a sustainable future for S A and all the citizens, dictate the agenda and policy parameters associated with social development. Again, politics and prosperity are dependent on perceptions which will have to be harnessed through a qualitative design in order to capture changing opinions, hence shaping the dimensions of reality.
- The reality of corporate social performance is what people perceive it to be. It is therefore important to solicit "insider" viewpoints from leading experts in the field who represent all sectors of society.
- Through qualitative research, differences in values between participants will be acknowledged which will enrich the data and have a positive impact on understanding the phenomena.
- The primary focus of the study will be to offer a holistic view of corporate social performance, focusing specifically on the indicators or drivers of corporate social performance. This can only be achieved through qualitative research.
- Qualitative research allows for free-ranging discovery. The orientation towards the data gathering is to discover new, original and un-verified information in order to enhance the richness of the data and improve the contextuality thereof in a rapidly changing landscape.
- Qualitative research is however regarded as subjective. The instrumentation used, in the case of this study semistructured interviews, is dependent on human interface and error. The conditions under which the interviews are conducted, are naturalistic to enhance free-flowing opinion and value production by the participants.

In an attempt to address possible criticism and concerns around the qualitative design, and more specifically the subjectivity issue, it was decided to outsource the analysis and interpretation of the data solicited through the in-depth structured interviews. An expert content analysis research practitioner's services were obtained to do the final analysis of the data obtained through the interviews.

- Determine the psychological state of persons or groups.
- Detect the existence of propaganda.
- Describe additional and behavioural responses to combination.
- Reflect cultural patterns of groups, institutions, or societies.

The textual data of the transcribed interviews were analysed through content analysis by this expert in an attempt to enhance objectivity and to offer an undisturbed view on the data presented. The final results of the interpreted data were offered to the researcher on which certain recommendations were made, with specific reference to the main objective of the study, i.e. to present indicators for corporate social performance in the SA context.

The following section of Chapter 8 will offer a theoretical overview of the technique of content analysis.

8.3 CONTENT ANALYSIS

8.3.1 Definition

Weber (1990) defines content analysis as a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from the text. These inferences are about the sender (s) of the message, the message itself, or the audience of the message. The rules of this inferential process vary with the theoretical and substantive interest of the investigator.

Furthermore, according to Weber (1990), there is no simple “right way” to do content analysis. He argues that instead, investigators must judge what methods are most appropriate for their substantive problems. It is for this reason that an external content analysis expert who specialises in content analysis, did the analysis of the data following a methodological approach most appropriate to the specific nature of the study and objectives to be reached.

8.3.2 Purpose of content analysis

Content analysis can be used for many purposes. Weber (1990) lists the following points (adopted from Berelson 1952) that refer to the variety of uses of content analysis:

- Disclose international differences in communication content.
- Compare media or “levels” of communication.
- Audit communication content against objectives.
- Code open-ended questions in surveys.
- Identify the intentions and other characteristics of the communicator.
- Determine the psychological state of persons or groups.
- Detect the existence of propaganda.
- Describe additional and behavioural responses to combination.
- Reflect cultural patterns of groups, institutions, or societies.

- Reveal the focus of individual, group, institutional or societal attention.
- Describe trends in communication content.

Considering the above uses of content analysis, it becomes clear that content analysis is the most appropriate technique to follow in analysing the textual data obtained through the structured in-depth interviews.

8.3.3 Advantages

According to Weber (1990), compared with other data-generating and analysis techniques, content analysis has several advantages:

- Communication is a central aspect of social interaction. Content-analytic procedures operate directly on text or transcripts of human communication.
- The best content-analytic studies use both qualitative and quantitative operations on text. Thus content analysis methods combine what are usually thought to be antithetical modes of analysis.
- Documents of various kinds exist over long periods of time. Culture indicators generated from such series of documents constitute reliable data that may span many centuries.
- In more recent times, when reliable data of other kinds exist, culture indicators can be used to assess quantitatively the relationships among economic, social, political and cultural change.
- Compared with techniques such as interviews, content analysis yields unobtrusive measures in which neither the sender nor the receiver of the message is aware that it is being analysed, consequently, there is little danger that the act of measurement itself will act as a force for change that confounds the data.

It is however important to note that for the purpose of this study the interviews with the participants will not be the object of analyses, but the transcribed versions of the recorded interviews. The textual data therefore will be the main content that will be analysed.

8.3.4 Reliability

According to Krippendorff (1980), there are three types of reliability that are pertinent to content analysis:

- **Stability**
Refers to the extent to which the results of content classification are invariant over time. Stability can be determined when the same content is coded more than once by the same coder. Inconsistencies in coding constitute unreliability.
- **Reproducibility**
Sometimes called intercoder reliability, the above term refers to the extent to which content classification produces the same results when the same text is coded by more than one coder. Conflicting codings usually result from cognitive differences among the coders, ambiguous coding instructions, or from random recording errors. High reproducibility is a minimum standard for content analysis.
- **Accuracy**
Refers to the extent to which the classification of text corresponds to a standard or norm. It is the strongest form of reliability. Krippendorff (1980) however notes that except for training purposes, standard codings are established infrequently for texts, with the result that researchers seldom use accuracy in reliability assessment.

In the case of this study, only one person who is regarded as an expert qualitative researcher and content analyst will be coding the textual data. High levels of stability will therefore be reached in the coding process, ensuring acceptable levels of reliability.

8.3.5 Validity

When using content analysis as the research methodology, the term “validity” can possibly be confusing. Therefore it is necessary to differentiate between the validity of the classification scheme, or variables derived from it, and the validity of the interpretation relating content variables to their causes or consequences (Weber 1990). In the case of this study, the validity of the classification scheme will enjoy priority in so far as the methodology or process that was followed by the expert content analysts.

It is however important to relate to the various types of validity and its applicability within content analysis. Weber (1990) offers the following explanations:

8.3.5.1 Steps in content analysis

Weber (1990) suggests that the process of creating and applying a coding scheme consists of several basic steps. If investigators have identified the substantive questions to be investigated, relevant theories, previous research, and the text to be classified, they next proceed with the following necessary steps:

- Face validity

According to Weber (1990) this is perhaps the weakest form of validity. It consists of the correspondence between investigators' definitions of concepts and their definitions of the categories that measured them. A category has face validity to the extent that it appears to measure the construct it is intended to measure. Content analysts often rely heavily on face validity, resulting in scepticism by some critics.

- Construct validity

A measure has construct validity to the extent that it is correlated with some other measure of the same construct. This construct validity entails the generalisability of the construct across measures or methods. A measure has high construct validity when it correlates with other measures of the same construct (convergent) and is uncorrelated with measures of dissimilar constructs (discriminant).

- Hypothesis validity

Relies on the correspondence among variables and the correspondence between these relationships and theory. A measure has hypothesis validity if, in relationship to other variables, it "behaves" as it is expected to.

- Predictive validity

Refers to the extent that forecasts about events or conditions external to the study are shown to correspond to actual events or conditions. These predictions may concern future, past or concurrent events. Predictive validity is powerful because the inferences from data are generalised successfully beyond the study to situations not under the direct control of the investigator. Content analytic data are seldom shown to have predictive validity.

- Semantic validity

Semantic validity exists when persons familiar with the language and texts examine lists of words (or other units) placed in the same category and agree that these words have similar meanings or connotations. Although this seems an obvious requirement for valid content analysis, many difficulties arise because words and category definitions are sometimes ambiguous.

8.3.6 Steps in content analysis

Weber (1998) suggests that the process of creating and applying a coding scheme consists of several basic steps. If investigators have identified the substantive questions to be investigated, relevant theories, previous research, and the text to be classified, they next proceed with the following necessary steps:

Step 1: Define the recording units

There are six commonly used options, i.e. words, word sense, sentence, theme, paragraph or whole text.

Step 2: Define the categories

In creating category definitions, investigators must make two basic decisions. The first is whether the categories are mutually exclusive and secondly how narrow or broad the categories should be. Webber (1990) suggests that it may make sense to use much more narrow or specific categories such as in the case of this study, for example social development as a key performance area for management staff.

Step 3: Test coding on sample of text

Testing not only reveals ambiguities in the rules, but also often leads to insights suggesting revision of the classification scheme.

Step 4: Assess accuracy or reliability

In the case of this study, making use of one coder, the reliability is guaranteed.

Step 5: Revise the coding rules

Ensure continuous revision of the coding process. In the case of this study, the revision will be done by the researcher.

Step 6: Return to Step 3

This cycle will continue until the coders achieve sufficient reliability or until the coding procedures work correctly. Again, a step unnecessary in this study.

Step 7: Code all the text

When high coder reliability has been achieved, the coding rules can be applied to all the text.

Step 8: Assess achieved reliability or accuracy

The reliability of human coders should be assessed after the text is classified. Never assume that if samples of text have been coded reliably, then the entire corpus of the text will also be coded reliably. Human coders are subject to fatigue and are likely to make more mistakes as the coding proceeds.

To sum up, the above steps have been followed by the independent coder with close supervision by the researcher. Furthermore, due to only one coder doing the analysis, reliability is guaranteed. Finally, the coder was present during all the interviews as an observer which brought the coder closer to the empirical process on the one hand, but still maintained independence in so far as his/her role was defined during the interviews. The researcher also required a basic

understanding and knowledge of the field of study from the coder due to its contemporary nature and contextuality in the SA environment. The coder fulfilled these requirements.

8.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

8.4.1 Introduction

An exploratory approach to the identification of critical indicators for corporate social performance in the South African context is based on the assumption that there are no generally recognised and acceptable indicators currently being used in SA. The reality of such indicators, especially in a time when the topic is globally quite contemporary, is socially constructed and therefore contextual in nature. Thus, inquiry into the indicators determining adequate social performance by SA corporations must be qualitative. According to Janesick (1994), in qualitative research, the aim is to look for the meaning and the perspectives of the participants in the study.

For SA corporations, representing private, public and civil society sectors, to delve more deeply into their own social performance practices, the use of narratives (in the case of this study, interview transcriptions), becomes important. With the advent of social and environmental concern integrated with economic growth and sustainability ("triple bottom line" Imperatives), driven globally from an institutional level, the role of corporations has shifted to that of respected citizens which value, respect, embrace and protect societies and, the natural environment. The global agenda of social and environmental cohesion is becoming a key focus of business leaders, governments and civil society organisations.

The focus of the interviews will therefore be to elicit the viewpoints and opinions of the 16 participants being respected individuals in SA who have developed unquestionable reputations in the field of social development. These people often express their opinions publically and this shapes the landscape continually and makes it necessary to harness these opinions into a framework. The structured in-depth interviews will allow this to be realised, resulting in the main objective of this study.

8.4.2 Role of the researcher

According to Lincoln and Guba (1986), the role of the researcher in an interpretivist paradigm is that of a "passionate participant" actively engaged in facilitating the "multivoice" reconstruction of his or her own construction as well as those of all other participants.

In this study, the aim of the researcher is to listen to and record the responses of the 15 participants. Although only five key questions were asked during the interviews, probing was

extensively used as a follow-up technique in reaching deeper levels of viewpoints and opinions of participants. The researcher also forwarded the five questions to the participants one week prior to the actual engagement with the participant. This allowed the participant the necessary time for preparation. Through the use of qualitative techniques, which in the case of this study was mainly content analysis of the interview transcriptions (textual data), the researcher gained insight and knowledge from leading SA experts in the field of corporate social performance. It was the researchers' intent to provide rich descriptions of the opinions of these experts on what determines adequate corporate social performance. Their opinions will inevitably influence, transform and shape the practice of corporate citizenship in SA.

It is however important to record the researcher's background and beliefs. This reporting will aim to disclose any bias and / or agendas that the researcher might be accused of. The researcher has been involved in the field of corporate social responsibility and investment for the past five years. The past twelve months have been the most extensive period during which the researcher was responsible for establishing a Centre for Corporate Citizenship at the University of South Africa. The key focus areas of the Centre will be the offering of training and education products and services to the private, public and civil society sectors in SA and on the African continent. It will furthermore also offer research solutions in the broad field of corporate citizenship.

The result of this study will undoubtedly contribute towards the compilation of curricula within the Centre as well as the identification of future research that might be carried out by the Centre. Ultimately the Centre will offer solutions in the field of corporate citizenship which will influence and shape business practice in future. Although this motive of the researcher might be viewed as an "own agenda" in doing the research in the first place, the scientific contribution and deepening of the understanding of the topic in general will neutralise bias in favour of a critical need to produce research results in an area with limited research substance.

Finally, the changing nature of this field and the global attention to sustainable development almost demands some scientific coping mechanisms of which the recording of 15 SA leading experts' opinions on the same occasion is but one such mechanism. This recording almost forces the changing environment and continuous development to a standstill, thus allowing documentation and the development of case history to take place.

8.4.3 Description of the participants

The key participants in this study were 15 leading experts in the field of social development and more specifically the corporate sectors' responsibility towards social development. The selection

of the 15 participants was based on convenience sampling although an attempt was made to include representatives from public, private and civil society sectors. The participants have a fundamental understanding of the corporate social responsibility and are generally regarded by the business sector as leading experts who have shaped the corporate citizenship landscape in SA to the level it currently occupies. Furthermore there are not a large number of such experts in SA, resulting in a situation in which the 15 participants almost represent the total population of such experts in SA. These participants have also influenced the business, public and civil society sectors on a strategic and institutional level, taking part not only in high level discussions but also determining policy parameters for the future corporate citizenship landscape in SA. Recognising that these influences take place at a very high level, the experts who participated in this study occupied executive positions in their various organisations. Their decision-making power also stretched further than the organisations they represented, culminating in influencing agendas and policy issues on an institutional level that has national and in some cases global impact.

Although these 15 experts work independently from one another, because of global and local development and change in practices, procedures and regulations, some of them have worked collaboratively, building between them a body of knowledge surpassing any other such group of experts in SA.

The following 15 individuals, representing the three sectors, participated in the research:

The Private Sector

1. Mr Phillip Armstrong : Managing Director: ENF Corporate Governance Advisory Services
2. Mr Mpho Makwana : Chief Executive Officer : Saatchi & Saatchi (SA)
3. Mrs Nicky Newton-King : Director : New Business & General Council: Securities Exchange South Africa
4. Dr Bongani Khumalo : Chairman: Transnet
5. Mr Paul Kruger : Chairman : SASOL
6. Mr Mohammad Adam : Corporate Council and Company Secretary: ESKOM
7. Mr Clem Sunter : Chairman: Anglo American Chairman's Fund

The Public Sector

8. Dr Zola Skweyiya (MP) : Minister of Social Development
9. Mr Vukani Mthindzo: Manager Stakeholder Relationships Department of Social Development
10. Mr Bruce Koloane : Chief Director: Economic Development Africa and the Middle East : Department of Trade and Industry

The Civil Society Sector

11. Mr Sean de Cleene : Director African Institute of Corporate Citizenship
12. Prof. Barney Pityana : Principal and Vice Chancellor University of South Africa
13. Rev. Sunette Pienaar : General Manager Heartbeat : Centre for Community Development
14. Mr Allister Smith : Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) representative on Naledi – The research and development arm of COSATU
15. Mrs Margie Keeton : Chairperson : Tsikululu Social Investment Services

The representation of participants in the three sectors was as follows:

Private sector:	50%
Public sector:	20%
Civil Society sector:	30%

The main reasons for having more private sector participants were as follows:

- To allow free-flowing, active idea generation of social performance from the group most knowledgeable about corporate social responsibility.
- The private sector in SA is currently taking the lead in shaping the landscape around mobilisation of resources to fast-track social development. Their active participation during the Johannesburg Summit (WSSD, 2002) is proof of this.
- The researcher is of the opinion that a sustainable global society and environment will in future be determined by the private sector. Global resources and infrastructure, including knowledge, skills and capital are still in the hands of the private sector.

8.4.4 In-depth interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 15 participants. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to create textual data for each interview. These narratives were then analysed, using content analysis as the qualitative research methodology. The interviews were semi-structured. Although the same five questions were put to the participants, the probing questions relating to specific questions differed, depending on the specific perspectives of the participants. The probing questions related to the five key questions however allowed for deeper delving into the main question body, ensuring richness of text and maximum contribution by the participants. The interviewing time allowed per participant was one hour and in most cases was sufficient to cover the five key questions.

The five questions were asked in a specific order. Question 1 and 2 were introductory questions which focused on creating a general context, leading up to Question 3, which was regarded as the key question, aiming to elicit the participants' viewpoints on the indicators of corporate social performance. Question 3 therefore related to the core of this study - the main source of data collection in achieving the aim of this study.

Questions 4 and 5 were more futuristic and allowed for generating scenarios which might contribute towards the shaping of the SA corporate citizenship and social performance landscape. Although the content of Questions 1, 2, 4 and 5 were analysed and reported on, Question 3 was analysed in more depth in order to reach the main objectives of the interviews.

Janesick (1998) lists the following types of interview questions:

- Basic descriptive questions

Example:

"Can you talk to me about your car accident? Tell me what happened that evening?"

- Follow-up questions

Example:

"You mentioned that planning time is important to you. Can you tell me how you use planning time?"

- Experience / Example questions

Example:

"You mentioned that you loved going to Paris. Can you give me an example or two that made you love Paris?"

- Simple clarification questions

Example:

"You used the term corporate citizenship today. Can you clarify that for me?"

- Structural / Paradigmatic questions

Example:

"You stated that this was a problematic situation. What would you describe as the cause of this problem?"

During the interviews, a combination of the above types of questions was asked. Usually, the five key questions were basic description questions, followed by some probing / follow-up questions, clarification and experience questions per key question.

8.4.5 Deciding on the research questions

The literature study revealed fundamental elements relating to the corporate citizenship debate. When placed in the SA context however, these theoretical arguments seem to lack some element of reality grounding if one considers the uniqueness of the SA socio-economic and socio-political landscape. After analysing the existing theoretical perspectives on corporate social performance, the following outcomes that emerged, fundamentally created the research constructs from which the actual research questions were derived. These outcomes were furthermore contextualised within the SA landscape in an attempt to refine the essence of the expected data to be analysed by the author. These theoretical outcomes were:

- Integrating social development imperatives with business strategy and practice – Question 1

The theory revealed the desperate need for aligning business imperatives with social imperatives. It also reported on local and international institutional drivers, for example The King 2 Report on Corporate Governance and the Global Reporting Initiative that are preparing the business landscape for large-scale transformation. This section of the literature review also revealed the complexity of the business landscape with specific emphasis on intangible value indicators, for example trust, integrity, reputation and culture. It also revealed the risk associated with the social construction of business and the inability of organisations to predict these factors. It also emphasised the emotional value embedded by society and the demands placed on an organisation to manage it.

It was therefore critical to obtain the viewpoints of the respondents on the integration of social imperatives with business imperatives.

- Stakeholder engagement and partnerships – Question 2.

The SA reality demands a concerted effort by all sectors to make SA a better place for all. Although strongly argued in theory, the partnership philosophy seems to be superficial if one considers the socio-political and economic history of SA. Pure engagement with stakeholders therefore seems marginal if cultural, political, social and economic factors are not acknowledged. The nature of the relationship between stakeholders and the expected value also need to be recognised. SA does not have a history of cross-sector collaboration and partnerships and therefore it requires de-coding of these relationships before it could be regarded as a key indicator of corporate social performance. The benefits are still viewed with a certain amount of scepticism.

The theory therefore had to be challenged in order to create a more context relevant basis which is relevant to the SA situation. A broad understanding was therefore necessary; therefore a general question on the viewpoints of the participants on stakeholder engagement was included.

- Indicators of corporate social performance in SA – Question 3

In the theory a strong argument was posed in favour of a Euro-centric approach in defining CSR, CSI and corporate citizenship. The models and foundations of corporate citizenship however, related to First World environments where there is generally a lack of socio-economic and socio-political reality. Furthermore the notion of philanthropy and corporate giving which could be seen as the origin of CSR does not, in its full consequence, relate to the SA scenario. The indicators, criteria and frameworks as described in the literature review also relate to American and European imperatives where socio-economic growth and development are largely absent. It was only since the advent of democracy in 1994 that civil action in SA was given its rightful place and the impact of this felt by the SA corporate sector.

Corporate social performance and corporate citizenship in SA therefore needed to be re-defined. The dynamic nature of the post-1994 era especially from a regulatory point of view demanded a relevant perspective and definition of corporate citizenship. The SA business sector has realised its role in social transformation, but is finding it difficult to operationalise this within its core business strategies. The question relating to indicators of corporate social performance therefore was seen as a first step in closing the gap between European/American and therefore First World perspectives and South African realities.

- Future landscape of corporate citizenship in SA – Question 4

The literature revealed the dynamic nature of corporate citizenship. It does not however contextualise this within the SA reality. The current and future political and social landscape in SA already suggests stronger civil action and regulation. Furthermore it is evident that alignment of effort and definite cross-sector partnerships (even between companies in the same sector – competitors) will be the only solution in reconstructing not only SA, but also the African continent.

In order to contextualise the indicators, an understanding was needed of the future landscape. Social cohesion as defined by the European Union certainly cannot be superimposed on the SA situation. It was therefore decided to create a few scenarios on how the changing landscape might affect the indicators against which social performance could be measured.

- Three critical areas of corporate citizenship in SA – Question 5

The theory suggests fundamental drivers of corporate citizenship in future for example integrated social accounting, auditing, reporting and assurance as well as measuring return on social investment to name but a few (see Figure 6.4). What is however critical in the SA environment which is characterised by a strong and sophisticated business voice on the one hand, and civil action and regulation on the other is the extent to which a significant impact can be made on social transformation. HIV/AIDS, poverty and job creation are the key social imperatives that are threatening the existence and sustainability of SA as a country, let alone the African continent as a whole.

You had the opportunity to shape the future of corporate citizenship in South Africa, what will be the three most critical areas that you will focus on?

The question therefore related to the practical next steps needed to start a process of social transformation in which the corporate sector will play a fundamental role. The question also related to generating priorities which could highlight the critical indicators that deserved immediate attention by all sectors in SA and was intended to “uncover” the unique SA indicators (see phase 3 of Figure 6.4 p. 280).

QUESTION 1

What are your views on the integration of social development with business strategies in SA?

Examples of clarification / probing questions:

- What are the key issues that drive the business sector in SA to become more socially responsible?
- What are the issues that the business sector should bear in mind when integrating these two philosophies?

QUESTION 2

What are your views on the business sector’s engagement with stakeholders in SA?

Examples of clarification / probing questions

- Who are the key stakeholders in the corporate citizenship landscape in SA?
- What is the nature of the relationship between these stakeholders?
- How could the relationship between these stakeholders be strengthened?
- Your understanding of cross-sector partnership?

QUESTION 3

In your opinion, what are the key indicators of Corporate Social performance in SA?

Examples of clarification / probing questions

- When will a business know if it's performing adequately in social terms?
- What are the most important management implications for the business sector that wants to be more socially responsible?

QUESTION 4

Characterise the future landscape of corporate citizenship in SA

QUESTION 5

If you had the opportunity to shape the future of corporate citizenship in South Africa, what will be the three most critical areas that you will focus on?

Questions 4 and 5 allowed for free-flowing thought generation with little if any follow - up or clarification by the researcher. The probing questions (examples under Questions 1 – 3) are just examples and were only asked if necessary. Furthermore, the individual unique responses of the participants also led to specific clarification questions that are not listed above. Finally, standard to all questions, was the “why” question that was asked as a matter of principle. The “why” question allowed for deepening of responses specifically to responses that were viewed by the researcher as controversial in nature. This was also asked to reduce subjectivity and bias during the content analysis of the interview transcriptions.

8.4.6 General assumptions

Because of the interpretive nature of qualitative research, it is important that the researcher's basic assumptions, upon which and through which the study is conducted, are explicated. This should facilitate the understanding not only of the choice of methodology, but also of the positional analysis taken. Because this form of research reflects a critical tradition in that it will confront observed societal injustices, it is fundamental to articulate some general assumptions. These assumptions, of which some are suggested by Janesick (1985), are as follows:

- With regard to data collection, interviews were recorded and transcribed, not measured. Behaviour has not been described. The sample was intensive rather than extensive. The data resulted in the discovery of key indicators and some future scenarios.
- Interpretation and meaning were understood within the sectorial (public, private and civil society) context.
- Truth was not constructed or understood outside of its social, political and cultural context.

- The interpretation of truth did not exist apart from some set of ideological precepts. These precepts were reported in the literature review of this study with specific focus on Chapter 7, dealing with a changing business landscape.
- There was no single voice or single truth that was dominant. Thus, this study assumes the research position of a postmodernist.
- Although the actual outcome of the study, i.e. determining the key indicators for corporate social performance represents the main objective of the study, the opinions and perceptions of the participants outside the main objective, were seen as equally important. The documentation of the SA business and social landscape as well as future perspectives of the changing business landscape were also of direct interest to this study.
- Reality is multiple, interrelated and divergent (Janesick 1985).
- There are representative power relations at work within each of the three sectors as well as within the collaborative which are socially and historically constituted.
- The power of language mediates the experience and the experienced against and within the subjective. The richness of the textual data as per the interview transcriptions allowed this mediation to realise.
- The research was intended to be transformative in so far as reporting on the key indicators which prior to the execution of the study, did not exist. Although the intention was to record the information gained, it was not viewed as the main intent, but rather in support of the main objective.

To sum up, Janesick (1998) argues that qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary field that uses a multimethod approach for its research. Its perspective is naturalistic and interpretive with regard to the understanding of human experience. It stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and the participants who are the experts who guide the researcher or through the area of the study and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. It emphasises the value-laden nature of inquiry and answers questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. This study therefore attempted to create meaning through a process of inquiry into the minds of 15 experts who in SA are regarded as leading figures in the field of corporate social responsibility.

8.5 ANALYSIS OF DATA

8.5.1 Grounding analysis in the data

In Social Research Methods Lawrence Neuman (1994) suggests four key distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research. The last of these, that qualitative analysis is somehow less abstract than quantitative analysis and therefore 'closer to raw data,' is particularly vulnerable to post-modern critique and is not a principle concurred with in this study.

The remaining three assertions however resonate with the qualitative approach followed in this research and inform the choice of analytical method adopted, as will be explained.

Quantitative research in the social sciences is traditionally utilized to prove a hypothesis. Strictly speaking, quantitative techniques are employed to disprove a null hypothesis (an alternative explanation to that which the researcher favours), thus rendering the alternate hypothesis (the explanation the researcher anticipates to be correct) a more probable explanation. Statistical analysis does however have broader applications in practice, but the point Neuman is attempting to make is that quantitative approaches are applied in a very structured research setting, where the process is conducted by rote. As soon as a statement is posited on social phenomena, a predetermined process is invoked that will result in statistical approval or dismissal.

The rote is very useful, especially for the credibility of the social sciences. These techniques are known, available, tried and tested, trusted and produce a clear result. The quantitative process is refined to an instrumental level, where researchers can choose, based on the nature of the problem and more especially the data under scrutiny, what set of quantitative tools they will employ. Neuman's second point is that quantitative methods are thoroughly standardised.

By contrast, qualitative techniques are neither rigid nor standardized to the same extent. Not all research questions are satisfactorily answered quantitatively because not all questions posit a hypothesis. Quantitative researchers choose ahead of time what methods of analysis they will employ according to the type of data their research is designed to deliver. However, one may not always be aware of the type of data one will be confronted with when the analysis must finally be made.

"Qualitative analysts do not often enjoy the operational advantages of their quantitative cousins in being able to predict their own analytic processes; consequently, they cannot refine and order their raw data by operations built initially into the design of the research" (Schatzman & Strauss 1973: 108).

Sometimes some investigative play is called for, free of assumptions that would constrain the research process and this is where qualitative techniques are useful. Schatzman and Strauss as well as Neuman are expressing some of the sentiments that form the basis for a grounded theory approach.

Grounded theory recognizes that rather than mutilating data to fit the method, method and theory should emerge from the data. Neuman further allows for this by identifying qualitative analysis as the method which allows for analysis as the research process progresses, rather than as a particular step that is undertaken once the data are in. This progressive analysis influences subsequent data collection in the same research process.

8.5.2 Systematic coding

Having asserted the freedom to engage the data as the data dictate, it is still important to propose a systematic approach, which is transparent and will allow consumers of this information to judge whether subsequent assertions are plausible.

The data constitute five natural categories, based on the five questions put to respondents. The initial steps in the analysis will treat data in these five categories. A three-step coding process will be applied to each category:

- Open Coding
Within a category, the researcher will attempt to identify themes in responses and assign initial codes. Themes are abstract concepts that repeatedly emerge from the concrete data (transcriptions of interviews).
- Axial Coding
Within a category, the researcher now refines the set of themes, eliminating, confirming and merging themes into a reasonable list. The researcher now begins to consider relationships and linkages between themes within the category and begins to describe and where necessary, attempt to explain these relationships.
- Selective Coding
This process involves coalescing the themes that have been emerging in the data into coherent concepts, generalizations and proposing positions based on the data, using illustrations from the data as empirical evidence.

Through this process the researcher will identify commonalities and contrasts in the responses, explore and explain these, and consider their implications for the research question at hand (see Table 8.2 for process flow).

Once the coding and analysis have been completed within categories, the researcher will, with the themes that have emerged, review the data without the categories, considering whether patterns emerge that transcend the directive tendency of specific questions. This last pass through the data may open up new venues of investigation and confirm or provide additional insight into analysis results.

Table 8.2: Data analysis process flow (Source: Beney 2003)

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5

Final analysis of Question 1

8.6 CONCLUSIONS

To be able to investigate the research problem and objectives, a thorough and formal methodology should be used. It was therefore decided to follow qualitative research methodology in executing the actual research. The reason behind this decision was due to the lack of existing research in this field of study as well as limited expertise in South Africa.

The universe was identified from which the sample frame was derived. Fifteen South African experts in the field of corporate social responsibility and corporate citizenship and using semistructured interviews were interviewed.

The data that was generated through in-depth semistructured interviews therefore were viewed as rich data that allowed for qualitative methodology as the most appropriate research strategy to follow. To obtain meaning through the data, the interviews were transcribed into rich text that was analysed through the content analysis methodology. The content analysis was done by an expert researcher who specialises in content analysis. Through plausible constructionism, the data obtained through the interviews were analysed to identify coherent groupings of meaningful information. These coherent themes that emerged in the five questions that were asked, related to the research questions at hand in order to reach the stated objectives of the study.

In the following chapter the research findings are discussed.

To contextualise the findings of the research, it is imperative to present a brief theoretical overview of the field of corporate social performance as described in section 2.12 and more specifically by Figure 3.4 (p. 280). The literature study revealed mainly seven theoretical constructs or driving themes that are relevant in the current corporate citizenship debate. The approach of the notion that these themes / constructs constitute the platform from which most of the theory is developed and arguments based on. The seven themes are presented below in Table 2.1 in a format relating to challenges and solutions.

Table 2.1: Theoretical constructs in corporate social performance

CHALLENGE	SOLUTION
Corporate citizenship integration with business strategy	Creating a supportive culture, systems, procedures and management practices through leadership
Stakeholder engagement (including multi-sector stakeholder engagement)	Cross-sector partnerships (public, private and civil society sectors)
Revolutionary changes in markets, societies, values and demographics. A strong argument in favour of the social construction of business	Leadership as well as sound risk-mapping and management strategies with specific emphasis on non-financial risk