CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY PRACTICES IN ENGINEERING CONSULTANCIES

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Abstract
This paper aims to identify the current level of adoption of some common CR practices in the largest global construction and engineering consultancies drawn predominantly from the UK and USA. The paper begins by outlining the benefits of CR and its role within modern business before taking a look at the current literature available on CR applied to the construction industry. Using content analysis of annual reports, corporate websites and other corporate communications, a summary of current practices has been identified and compared with recent studies of global trends and best practices. It is clear that the organisations considered are aware of the CR agenda with widespread adoption, but they have some way to go before catching up with the global leaders. They need to expand the range of issues considered, be more transparent and accountable in their reporting and find new ways to improve their CR performance.

Keywords
Sustainability, CSR, Strategy, Consulting, Reporting.

INTRODUCTION

The adoption of corporate sustainability and corporate social responsibility reporting has received growing acceptance in the business world. Recent surveys indicate that the number of companies undertaking such reporting has grown from 50% five years ago, to close to 80% in the 250 largest global companies (KPMG, 2008). It has been shown however that the majority of companies reporting are multinational corporations (Gjolberg, 2009), which is believed to be due to their increased public exposure to varied markets and diverse cultural issues. To date the greatest progress in reporting has come from the extractive and manufacturing industries with a much slower response from the service industries and construction sector.

Whilst some studies have been undertaken to look at current practices in the construction industry, these mainly consider specific elements such as ethics or welfare, or focus on the impacts of the construction process such as waste or materials. Little attention has been paid to the practices of consultants and this research examines the role of corporate responsibility (as the communication of commitment to corporate sustainability) and the current level of implementation in