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Concept Paper

The Case for Multidisciplinary Frameworks for Developing Effective Solutions to Complex Human Problems: An Illustration Based on Development Education, Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Marketing

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Abstract: Education, especially development education (DE), and a number of socially focused disciplines, including corporate social responsibility (CSR) and social marketing (SM), have long been targeted by policy makers for deriving advice on the 'wisdom' of levelling up differences and addressing sources of disadvantages at individual, group and/or regional levels. Additionally, the combined wisdom of such disciplines can also be a great source of advice to effectively address perennial universal problems. This paper is conceptual in nature with a multidisciplinary outlook. It contrasts DE, CSR and SM, with the view to deriving common grounds as well as strengths and areas for further development that can produce more comprehensive explanations and solutions to social problems. Such inclusive, more comprehensive explanations would help advise social-cause-focused workers, including researchers, learners and policy makers, about how each discipline can contribute to the resolution of multifaceted problems, the so-called 'wicked problems', that each discipline may not be fully equipped to address. The method of analysis used is an adjusted version of critical discourse analysis. It is used to explore the disciplines at four levels, namely definitional, philosophical, methodological and performance levels, thus giving a comprehensive view of each discipline's nature, philosophical outlook, methodology and perceived efficacy in achieving its aims. The derived arguments also benefitted from comments provided by seven experienced representatives from the three disciplines. Overall, the outcomes suggest a relative maturity of critical ability in DE but also more effective and efficient methodological and evaluative perspectives in CSR and SM. Although the outcome of the analysis is open for debate, it nevertheless suggests several opportunities for mutual learning at all four levels. The paper suggests a novel integrated 'supra-level' framework that may help workers, in these three areas of knowledge, gain valuable insights from each of the three disciplines and highlight valuable opportunities for capitalising on their respective strengths.

Keywords: policy making; justice; sustainability; development education; social marketing; CSR; multidisciplinary approaches; 'wicked' problems; 'intersectionality'; wars/conflicts

1. Introduction

It is increasingly clear that disciplines with similar aims should work together to be more effective in achieving their aims [1–3]. It is also clear that many policy makers, researchers and practitioners are aware of the multifaceted nature of influences on human behaviour and the factors underpinning it [4].

To illustrate this point, one may easily verify the multiplicity of work that demonstrates the contribution of different disciplines to the issue of sustainability. For example, a quick browse through the latest issue of the journal *Sustainability*, Issue 15 (18), shows the rich variety of contributions covering several disciplines that can and are having a positive impact on work focused on promoting sustainability. Among such contributions, the author notes the inputs on logic, technology, education and marketing ([5–8]).

Hence one could argue that if such contributions are systematically integrated into a broader framework, the outcome may be more robust and inclusive. Such integration would also enable workers and policy makers to appreciate the bigger picture of factors (and not "miss the forest for the trees"). Such an understanding would in turn encourage a more integrated approach to social problems with the potential to be more effective.

This paper attempts to suggest a way forward in this enterprise for integrating contributions from several perspectives, as reflected by different disciplines.

The paper advocates that researchers, practitioners and policy makers with social aims should learn from each other with a view to mutually benefit from the respective strengths of their disciplines. This is supported by a growing number of researchers who raised the issue about the current division and limitations of disciplinary design or even what constitutes a discipline or a subdiscipline [9]. This paper argues that there is a pressing need for an appreciation of multiple perspectives to address complex issues and that one perspective is not enough to fully understand the nature of social challenges and develop successful and acceptable programmes of action. Indeed, Gibbons et al. [2] talked about two types of knowledge: "Mode 1" knowledge, produced in the form of scientific, institutionalised disciplines, and "Mode 2" knowledge, which exposes the inadequacy of the 'unnatural' scientific knowledge boundaries when addressing real-world issues and aims to create a broader, trans-disciplinary framework that takes cognizance of the social and economic context in which it is produced and used. Other researchers, particularly those engaging with social or environmental problems, would use more down-to-earth expressions to reflect the necessity of the Mode 2 knowledge. In this manner, Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber suggested that since we are dealing with "wicked problems", given the complexity of the issues that humans face, it is essential to adopt multilevel, multidisciplinary cooperation for understanding and resolving them [3]. Indeed, it is easy to understand such a perspective when considering examples of complex issues humans face such as environmental erosion, socio-economic injustices and terrorism. Notwithstanding these arguments for a more plural approach to solving problems, there are different opinions about both the boundaries and the sources of a discipline. In this respect, a discipline's perspective has been seen as the lens through which it understands phenomena. In the next section, this paper will review some perspectives on disciplines themselves.

At their most 'surface level', disciplines refer to "a particular branch of learning or body of knowledge such as physics, psychology, or history" [10]. Miller [11] argues that each discipline has a view of reality, which he called a 'disciplinary perspective'. Such a perspective should differentiate it from other disciplines. Accordingly, disciplines filter out 'nonrelevant' phenomena and 'filter in' those that match its perspective. While there may be a 'light touch' conception of a disciplinary perspective, mainly focusing on key topics of interest (e.g., key topics of biology, sociology, theology), other conceptions may have a much broader perspective that includes a philosophical/epistemological outlook, ethical, assumptions, concepts, theories and methods [12]. Indeed, just focusing on the methodological dimension, different disciplines use different methods of studies (e.g., econometric modelling for "economics", clinical interviews and experimental design for "psychology" or procedures for developing legal arguments in the field of the law).

In this respect, a subdiscipline becomes a 'specialised version' of the broader discipline. At times, it may be unclear which discipline is the 'mother' of each subdiscipline since different authors may disagree on the origin(s) of a discipline. This situation becomes even more complex when the so-called subdiscipline no longer limits itself by the methodology of the alleged mother discipline but rather becomes eclectic in its selection of topics and methodologies, as is the case for example with CSR or SM compared to marketing, as will be argued below.

Disciplines also highlight a social element in that they reflect the existence of an intellectual community that is devoted to studying a particular subject [13]. While such a community can be decisive in helping advance knowledge, it may also become an obstacle to progress as noted by Kuhn's [14] concept of paradigm (agreed assumptions, principles

and methods). Kuhn's observations indicate that scientists may become 'biased' towards a dominant paradigm until a threshold of anomalies demonstrates it is no longer adequate and a paradigm revolution leading to a more 'accommodating' paradigm takes place.

In light of the above arguments, a discipline may become a 'subdiscipline' if it differentiates enough from the 'mother discipline'. This may apply to all three disciplines focused on in this paper despite their eclectic approaches, as they aim to capitalise on the knowledge and technics of several disciplines. Thus, some proponents argue that both CSR and SM are derived from marketing, as CSR contributes to marketing the company, and associated products, to its existing and potential customers, while SM is seen as a natural development of the very influential field of commercial marketing. DE too has been seen as a response to the neoliberal excesses against education [15,16].

Building bridges between disciplines can help hasten emerging challenges to an existing inadequate paradigm and enable capitalising on advances in different disciplines to help achieve effective solutions to complex problems. However, workers focusing on the respective contributions from several disciplines are faced with a plethora of concepts that may be confusing. In particular, they are faced with several conceptual perspectives that at times may be used interchangeably [17,18]. These include 'intradisciplinary' (working within one discipline), 'multidisciplinary' (cooperation between representatives of several disciplines), 'interdisciplinary' (integrating knowledge from different disciplines about a particular issue/theme), cross-disciplinary (considering one discipline from the perspective of another, such as the "history" of "psychology") and trans-disciplinary (deriving a unified perspective that moves beyond the disciplines to create a unified framework to enable contributions from representatives of several disciplines).

Progress in terms of the degree of integration between disciplines often follows the order of the introduction of these terms (i.e., intra-, multi-, inter-, cross- and transdisciplinary).

This paper encourages working with several disciplines with a view to eventually develop supra-level frameworks that help integrate the perspective of relevant disciplines focusing on tackling 'wicked problems'. Such an approach should lead to more integrative and, consequently, more robust solutions to such problems.

There are increasing calls for such a perspective advocated in all three disciplines by workers on multifaced problems who have become only too aware of the huge limitations reflected in the current specialism present in the design of disciplines. For instance, the fields of education, CSR and critical social marketing all advocate for the need to adopt macro, systemic, transformative approaches to problems (e.g., [19,20]). The authors working in these three disciplines appear to argue that action focused at an individual or even an institutional level is too limited to produce effective, long-term results.

Indeed, while the arguments for the need for knowledge and skills specialisation are only too obvious in the light of the proliferation of technological and scientific knowledge, this by no means should translate into analysis and solutions that are exclusively focused on one discipline. It is also clear that policy makers would be more interested in more inclusive, robust approaches to solving social problems as they aim to ensure that available budgets offer the best value for the diverse constituents they represent. Additionally, given that several sources have highlighted the importance of each of the three disciplines in helping bring about a broader socio-economic impact on the targeted regions [21–23], the need for adopting a multidisciplinary approach to problems becomes obvious.

Despite the natural links between development education, social marketing and corporate social responsibility, there appears to be a scarcity of initiatives about the opportunities that the combined study of the three disciplines may offer to researchers and policy makers in these areas. In the next sections, this paper will present the methodology adopted for this analysis and then introduce the three disciplines in turn and proceed to review their strengths and weaknesses at philosophical/critical, methodological and practical/effectiveness levels. The purpose is to derive recommendations for mutual learning and cooperation that may be readily applied by researchers and policy makers.

2. The Methodological Perspective

The method of analysis adopted in this paper is a specific approach of critical discourse analysis (CDA) supported by feedback on the outcome of analysis from peer researchers. This section will review what is meant by discourse analysis (DA) and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Subsequently, the approach adopted for this paper will be described in relation to CDA.

According to Gee [24], DA is the study of the use of language to assume three functions: communicating information, taking action and positioning ourselves vis-à-vis others. There are different types of DAs. While some DA approaches, considered descriptive, may focus on the nature of language and how it works, other approaches, considered critical, want to go beyond the pure understanding and presentation of language but somehow want to act on it with a view of changing the reality of our world. Gee [24] describes the followers of this second approach as follows:

> "They also want to speak to and, perhaps, intervene in, institutional, social, or political issues, problems, and controversies in the world" [24].

It is significant that Gee [24] contrasts researchers who criticise the critical approach as 'unscientific' since such an approach encourages the disruption of the objectivity of the research process. On the other hand, the adherents of the critical approach argue that such an approach is necessary, if one wants to go beyond the simple passive observer who just describes events and phenomena, to assuming our social and political responsibilities for change.

A critical approach promotes engagement with social causes through self-reflection to challenge unfair disadvantages resulting from, inter alia, reductionist and/or dogmatic arguments that overlook complexities. The purpose is to promote inclusion underpinned by openly agreed ethical principles [25].

A number of authors [26–29] referred to a number of principles that would help define a critical approach. In particular, eight principles were listed by Van Dijk [27] as characteristics of a CDA approach (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Characteristics of a CDA approach (adapted from Van Dijk, 2003 [27]).

1. Problem-oriented
2. Multidisciplinary
3. Not restricted by a school or a discipline
4. Focuses on power relations and inequalities
5. Highlights underpinning ideologies that reproduce dominance and inequality
6. Unravelling the mechanisms involved in reproducing the inequalities (e.g., legitimation processes such as the 'manufacturing of consent').
7. Challenges and scrutinises those in a position of power with a view to determining abuse of power and the subtle processes they misuse (mental, social, cultural, economic, etc.) to maintain/monopolise their power.
8. Develops and sustains solidarity with dominated groups and develops concerted approaches to resist and counter the effects of insidious power and ideologies.

The approach adopted in this paper, whilst having strong affinities with the above principles, focuses more on disciplines' mutual relations rather than human group relations, although they do not exclude this dimension as well. Indeed, it is arguable that any discipline may reflect 'a paradigm' adopted by those practicing it, whether consciously or subconsciously. Accordingly, and for purposes of accuracy, perhaps this paper's approach may be more accurately described as Critical Disciplines' Discourse Analysis (or CDDA) to highlight where the focus is.

The approach reviews three socially focused disciplines by referring to key texts and references and contrasting them on the following key dimensions:

- Definitional level;
- Philosophical level;
- Strategic/methodological levels;
- Measurement/monitoring of performance level.

One possible criticism may be raised here as it may be argued that there may be a bias in the selection of sources of arguments. There are two responses to such criticism: First, key references, representing the three disciplines covered, were selected to build the arguments. Second, feedback was sought on earlier versions of this paper from seven academics representing each of the three covered disciplines (some with experiences in more than one discipline), regarding the adequacy of the arguments and how they may be improved. The feedback received helped moderate and further develop the ideas presented in this paper. Nevertheless, it is clear that there is a diversity of views in these disciplines which may also be affected by 'ideological' opinions.

3. Outcomes of Analysis of DE, CSR and SM

3.1. Definitional Similarities

Overall, DE, CSR and SM are three disciplines whose primary aim, at first look, is the betterment of society [30,31]. However, there are some differences, as shown in the following introductions to each of the disciplines.

3.1.1. A Brief Introduction to DE

UNESCO proposed the following definition of DE [32]:

"Development education is concerned with issues of human rights, dignity, self-reliance, and social justice in both developed and developing countries".

McCloskey [33], more succinctly, suggested that DE is seen as education towards action and social change to address the challenges of inequality and injustice wherever they may be.

DE advocates the development of a new paradigm that fosters a re-conceptualisation of knowledge with a view to promoting the transformative role of education [34] so as to induce social change across nations guided by inclusive human values. Accordingly, DE may be seen as part of the broader enterprise of global education [35]. In turn, global education itself led to the subsequent development of the concept of global citizenship [30]. The 'global citizenship movement' itself has been extended to organisations rather than just individuals. Indeed, procedures have been put forward to implement the new interpretation. In this respect, the work of Wood and colleagues [36] is significant as it suggested a framework for supporting businesses towards becoming Global Business Citizens. This development suggests that DE is a shifting ground and encourages the cross-breeding of ideas such as between education and businesses.

DE and global learning work has highlighted three perspectives that appear to be prerequisites for implementation [30]: the importance of independent judgement, the promotion of mature world citizens with a sense of responsibility towards the world, and notions of critical literacy that support the first two prerequisites.

3.1.2. A Brief Introduction to CSR

CSR is seen as a relatively recent discipline, although arguably one might say that as long as organisations existed, there have always been concerns and questions about corporate responsibility [37]. The issue of CSR became particularly conspicuous in the news over the last 3 decades or so [38] as a result of 'misdemeanours that verged on the criminal' emanating from many companies, some of which were thought to be respectable ones. One of the most damning allegations is the claim that a number of irresponsible companies helped create the 2008 economic recession [39].

There are no agreed definitions of CSR, but the World Business Council for Sustainable Development [40] defines CSR as the "Continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large".

3.1.3. A Brief Introduction to SM

SM is seen as a relatively recent discipline. Among the people who saw opportunities in capitalising on the power of marketing for the good of society, Wiebe [41] seems to reflect a key milestone in the development of SM. Having noticed the effectiveness of marketing in changing people's attitudes to products and services, he asked: 'why can't you sell brotherhood like you sell soap?'. A couple of decades later, the new discipline of SM was born [42]. Over the years, plenty of definitions have been suggested to try and encompass the focus of SM but recently, a unifying definition, known as the 'Consensus Definition', produced by the International Social Marketing Association (iSMA) has been proposed [43]:

> "Social Marketing seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviours that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good."

> "Social Marketing practice is guided by ethical principles. It seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, audience and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition sensitive and segmented social change programmes that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable."

This definition differentiates between social, commercial and responsible marketing. Indeed, as argued earlier, while commercial marketing and socially responsible organisations may undertake some activities that intend to help address a social problem (e.g., causal marketing), their ultimate purpose is to make a profit and remain sustainable. By contrast, SM's primary responsibility is to society.

In line with the definition of SM, a new armamentarium of research and application tools has been developed, and its efficiency and effectiveness have been demonstrated through many social issues. Lee and Kotler [44]), in their recent book, *Success in SM*, recently listed 100 success stories demonstrating the effectiveness of SM tools and practices. The success stories covered as wide areas as public health, violence/abuse prevention, environmental protection, community engagement, supporting financial well-being and advancing educational achievements. These successes are by no means exhaustive as new areas are constantly added to the mix.

Such effectiveness, paired with an increased appetite by social activists/workers for effective technics for resolving complex social problems, led to the production of the first Encyclopaedia of SM that was launched in 2022 at the annual international SM conference [45].

3.1.4. So How Similar Are the Three Disciplines at the Definitional Level?

There are broad similarities between all three disciplines but some differences too. For example, one may notice the broad similarity of scope between SM and DE. This should come as no surprise as some early practitioners of the SM discipline argue that it had its roots in public education [46] and suggest that as early as the Greek and Roman periods, there have been initiatives, such as campaigns to free slaves and public health initiatives, that may be considered early instances of SM. This public education dimension also applies to a CSR perspective where stakeholders (people with vested interests) are made aware of the environmental/social consequences of an organisation's business operations and shown alternative processes to prevent deleterious effects.

Nonetheless, there appear to be some differences. On the one hand, SM is quite eclectic in selecting its tools, borrowing from many disciplines, as long as they fit the purpose. On the other hand, DE appears to primarily focus on the role of education in achieving its goals [47]. Additionally, while both SM and DE appear to primarily focus on social and

environmental needs, CSR puts these needs on par with economic needs [48]. Perhaps another difference is that DE from the outset appears to adopt a more global perspective, whereas for SM and CSR, this is not always the case. Finally, it may be argued that while DE can be perceived as a 'first-order' discipline, in that it may directly affect behaviour for personal change, SM may be seen as a second- or third-order discipline as its effects include organisational and systemic dimensions.

These are some suggested areas for further investigation that researchers or adopters, such as policy makers, of the three disciplines may need to consider in order to determine the respective advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

3.2. Similarities at the Philosophical/Ethical Level

Perhaps it is worth noting at the outset that it is not always clear what philosophical traditions may be behind any of the disciplines. Indeed, this led a CSR worker to proclaim the following:

> "The fundamental problem that needs to be addressed in CSR scholarship is whether it is descriptive or normative or something else. I maintain that much of the current literature is inadequately descriptive and philosophically deficient with regards to norms." [19].

It may be useful to address this criticism by considering the ontological dimension and associated assumptions, as they may shed some light on the philosophical perspective that underpins each of the disciplines. As argued by many researchers [49], ontology, or the arguments about the nature of reality, is a prerequisite for any epistemological discussion regarding how reality is to be known. Accordingly, the nature of reality may hover between two extremes: either "there is an objective reality out there" unspoilt by human endeavours, or, alternatively, "all reality is subjective". There are advocates on both sides of the fence. However, there seems to be 'a third way', critical realism (CR), that appears to integrate both positions. This paper argues that this third way appears most compatible with all the three disciplines considered here. Hence, such an approach will be reviewed next in more detail.

3.2.1. Characteristics of CR That Make It a Helpful Third Way

Annette Scheunpflug and colleagues [50] argued that the qualitative/quantitative divide that affected social sciences about what constitutes acceptable evidence has seeped through to research on education and more specifically global education. Khazem [51] offered critical realism (CR) as a promising solution to the identified dilemma.

CR is a metatheory, presented by Roy Bhaskar in the 1970s and beyond [52,53]. A metatheory is a position based on a critical exploration of the theoretical frameworks or lenses that have provided direction to research and to researchers (Paterson et al., 2001). Other examples of metatheories include positivism or postmodernism. Critical realism is characterised by three principles [51–55]:

- Ontological realism, reflected in the belief in an objective, independent reality out there;
- Epistemological relativism, reflected in the argument that our knowledge of reality is socially and linguistically constructed;
- Judgemental rationality, which allows for various interpretations based on different moral or epistemological arguments.

Accordingly, CR provides a valid argument that the world is ontologically real and can be improved. Additionally, given that reality is affected by a multiplicity of factors and mechanisms, this means that the researcher needs a multiplicity of theories and disciplines to account for the natural complexity of events [56]. This argument also gives support for research initiatives, such as this paper, that focus on developments in several disciplines.

3.2.2. The Ethical Perspective

At the ethical level, SM programmes, and arguably those of DE and CSR, encourage consultation on how to implement ethical aims by referring to both deontological (rights and duties) and utilitarian principles (outcomes) which are not necessarily at odds with each other [57].

Given that all three disciplines seem to routinely refer to ethical dimensions such as equity, justice and social responsibility, perhaps it is worth considering the application of a recurrent concept, the golden rule, originally suggested by Immanuel Kant [58], that is used to justify ethical practice [59] to see if there could be a common ethical basis. In order to help decision makers make ethically robust decisions, Gensler [59] argued for revisiting the golden rule (GR) ("Treat others as you would wish to be treated") given its worldwide acceptability in most cultures/religions or ethics [60]. He argued that its application would require the adoption of a scientific perspective based on the first four steps shown in Table 2 below. He argued that if it is applied properly, the current biases in ethical decisions would be greatly reduced.

Table 2. Inclusive application of the golden rule.

1. Knowing how our/my actions affect others (knowledge).
2. Imagining what it would be like if I/we were in the same situation I am/we are judging (imagination).
3. Considering if I/we would be willing to suffer the results if I/we were in the same situation (testing).
4. Finally, making a decision to act in a way that is acceptable to me/us if we were in the same situation (congruous decision).
5. Flexibility/inclusion. This reflects a person's ability to demonstrate openness to a variety of perspectives/views with the purpose of maximising the benefit to all (flexibility/inclusion).
6. Impartiality. This quality reflects a commitment to working continuously to remove/minimise bias in decisions (impartiality).

Note: The table shows both Gensler's steps 1–4 [59] and two additional steps, 5 and 6, for a more inclusive application of the golden rule.

It is clear that the process of establishing just outcomes, based on Gensler's approach [59], will depend on the level of complexity of the situation faced and the level of authenticity that the actors are willing to demonstrate. Hence, it seems that at least two other dimensions, steps 5 and 6, need to be added to the four above, as shown in Table 2.

The above six dimensions have been translated into an 'iterative model', with four steps and two core principles, reflected in the flexibility/inclusion and impartiality, referred to above, that may offer guidance on how to develop more ethically sound decisions (see Figure 1 below).

For instance, the model may guide reflections concerning the neoliberal excesses against education [15] with a view to go beyond the political soundbites and highlight how the valid aims of social responsibility can ultimately benefit all. Accordingly, it could help challenge the blind rational instrumentalism that is promoted by some corporations and 'corporate submissive governments' for the sake of short-term expediency and replace it with a more responsible inclusive attitude reflected in the French principle of 'Noblesse Oblige' (obligated through a sense of nobility of character) [16,61,62].

The above philosophical considerations linked to the three disciplines seem to suggest the following two points:

(a) Given the lack of ontological clarity underpinning the three disciplines, it seems that critical realism offers a valid 'philosophical tool' to develop a comparative understanding between the three disciplines.

(b) The golden rule, given its broad acceptability among many cultural traditions, also appears to be a valid ethical model for comparing the ethical validity of each of the disciplines.
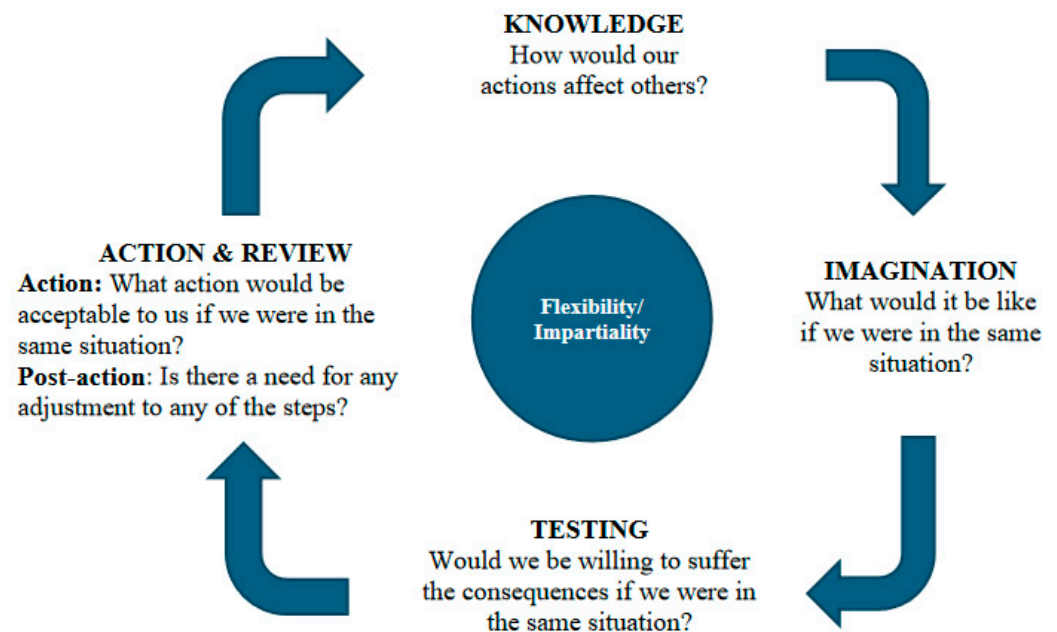

Figure 1. An iterative model for applying the golden rule, based on the revised Gensler's model [59].

3.3. Are There Similarities between the Disciplines in Their Strategic Research and Implementation Methodologies?

It is worth noting that when addressing this question, one would tend to refer to the general trend observed in each of the three disciplines rather than what may appear as a still broadly isolated development. For example, we may argue that SM may still lack an established critical tradition despite some very worthwhile recent initiatives (e.g., [20]), especially if such initiatives decry the lack of a critical perspective in that very discipline, as shown later. Hence, starting with the use of critical research methodologies, a cursory look at DE publications [50,63] suggests that DE has demonstrated more readiness to adopt various discursive methodologies which appear to be hardly touched by CSR or even SM. Perhaps this is partly because education has already been at the forefront of the disciplines willing to adopt the latest qualitative methodologies given its longer history, its higher social exposure and the nature of its overtly stated aims (e.g., transformative learning, social/economic justice, human rights and global citizenship) make it fertile ground for ideas that analyse power structures with a view to challenging them.

Qualitative research has developed a lot over the last 20 years and offers an array of options to the qualitative researcher, including post-positivist, constructivist and critical approaches [64]. These areas have been exploited by education in general and more particularly DE.

What SM and CSR seem to lack in the adoption of the critical perspectives (as evident in DE) appears to be compensated for by a more systematic and practical perspective that helps achieve their aims. SM and CSR practitioners tend to be first and foremost action-led, and their approaches include a careful analysis of the sources of influence on 'consumer behaviour' and the development of strategies for encouraging positive and adaptive changes in their target group populations [65,66]. This is no surprise since both SM and CSR are used to dealing with the hard, fact-based world of business where any claim needs to be backed up by evidence to gain the support of investors.

Among the tools used in CSR to measure corporate performance (and therefore CSR reputation), one may list performance measurement models covering key stakeholders

of an organisation, corporate reputation measurement, Carroll's CSR pyramid/level of implementation of CSR model and social involvement/effect models [67].

Just like its sister discipline of marketing, SM considers the interplay of all disciplines' models and theories to help induce the behavioural changes they target. Accordingly, SM seeks to understand all influences on their target groups, including psychological, social, cultural, economic, contextual and legal. SM advocates have been trying to develop their general strategy for undertaking SM projects since the early days of this new discipline. Indeed, Fourali [31] derived a framework from several established frameworks to try to integrate all the steps deemed important in any of the studied frameworks used for designing SM projects. The resulting "Integrative Framework" includes the steps shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Integrative social marketing framework [31].

1. Problem identification supported by a public authority (e.g., by public bodies or NGOs)
2. Planning based on broad understanding of the causes and stakeholders associated with the problem
3. Purpose/mission of the SM project (e.g., raising awareness, changing attitudes, behaviours, etc.).
4. Situation analysis/market research, to understand key challenges and opportunities
5. Targeting population(s) (e.g., most vulnerable groups) and determining potential obstacles
6. Determining measurable objectives that enable the evaluation of effectiveness of the project
7. Consultatively, determining an attractive offer for change that can motivate the target group(s)
8. Selecting a marketing mix (i.e., the details of the attractive offer involving benefits and costs)
9. Determining the resources available to support the project, including government support, academic advice, NGOs and businesses
10. Planning and implementing the campaign
11. Monitoring the progress and evaluating outcomes

Note: The above framework became known as the PIT ACE model [68] to reflect five major steps.

Despite the above procedural advantages of CSR and SM, both disciplines have detractors too. In the case of CSR, Milton Friedman, the Nobel laureate [69,70], argued that companies cannot be responsible entities as their main purpose is to generate a profit. This point was counteracted by the argument that organisations should be liable to the society that allows them to exist. They have rights but also responsibilities that include social and environmental care [70].

Both CSR and SM have also been criticised for skirting around the contextual/structural and ideological causes that may lead to the conditions they try to address. In particular, Gordon et al. [20] listed the following key criticisms directed at SM: being unethical, lacking reflexivity, being power agnostic, being neoliberally oriented, being culturally insensitive and imperialist, being pseudo-participatory and, finally, responsibilising the individual.

DE does refer to systematic methodologies, but what is not always obvious is the clarity or consistency of the procedures (specific details about what happens at each of the identified steps). For example, with respect to DE, Bourn [71] advocated for the inclusion of a number of steps covering the identification of issues, investigating them, seeking solutions, carrying out actions and evaluating impact. Additionally, some frameworks were suggested for identifying areas of focus of DE such as a 'global outlook', 'recognition of power and inequality', a 'belief in social justice' and a 'commitment to reflection and dialogue' [71]. However, these areas of focus by DE do not reflect clear enough advice about the various options at each level of these dimensions and, more specifically, guidance on how to undertake a DE project or even the underpinning theories that may inform the sought-out changes [72].

Recently, O'Flaherty and Liddy [73] stated the following:

> "When it comes to education, both defining outcomes and measuring success are difficult as the process of education is complex and multifaceted" [73].

As a result of this observation, they seemed to argue that performance measurements may not be always appropriate. This may come across as a 'straw man' argument as the purpose is not to drop any opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of DE, and associated topics, but rather to address the challenge of looking for creative ways to produce solutions. As an example, SM has been dealing with measuring 'soft achievements' since its early development as a discipline.

If the specificity argument is not addressed, there may be a danger of assuming that because an action has been taken, it will lead to the expected results. This assumption was made by some DE workers when they tried to encourage the inclusion of sustainability and justice issues into the decision-making process of commercial companies through business school educational programmes [30]. The outcomes were quite discouraging, and the Chartered Management Institute CEO, Ann Francke see Haughton, [74], had a strong reminder about making undue assumptions. She argued that 'acceptance of a value' may lead to ticking a box, making it a "superfluous, ancillary activity" rather than genuinely reflecting it at the 'core of the business' linking it to the purpose, vision and mission of a company.

Clearly, there are exceptions to the above observations regarding DE's research methodologies, as shown in some DE work [75,76] that demonstrated a practical approach to researching DE issues. Andreotti's [75] framework of 'Soft Versus Critical Approaches to Global Citizenship Education', is a useful, practical tool for highlighting the critical aspects and 'philosophy' of a project. This was demonstrated in a project in the Republic of Ireland [77] with the purpose of understanding practices and representations of development in post-primary schools. The work confirmed the following:

> "...the relationship between the generation of poverty and wealth, and the cultural and structural aspects that create and maintain the unequal distribution of labour and resources in the world are often extremely difficult and sensitive issues to address in development education." [77].

As another example with helpful practical research advice, one may also cite the work of Tarozzi [76,78] that studied the education policies on global citizenship across primary schools in 10 European countries. The project studied the implementation of global citizenship education in those countries and determined whether the approach was bottom-up or top-down, whether the approach was centralised or decentralised and the type of dissemination undertaken. Among the barriers to implementation the research identified were attitudes, curriculum, teachers' training, resources and system structures.

Despite the existence of some work demonstrating practical research in DE methodologies, in general, it is not very common. Indeed, Scoffham [79] stated the following:

> "Being able to establish that learning has occurred is essential in any educational endeavour. It is a particular challenge in evolving areas of the curriculum such as global learning where the frames of reference and modes of thought have yet to be fully established. It was claimed earlier that global learning suffers from being ill-defined and ambiguous. This lack of clarity inevitably impacts on notions of achievement" [79].

This section of the paper has contrasted the strategic/methodological dimensions and suggested that the tendency for the adoption of more systematic methods of demonstrating the effectiveness of an approach appears to be more prevalent in CSR or SM rather than DE. It argued that perhaps the high awareness about justifying any investment may be more demanding in CSR and SM due to the proximity of these disciplines to the world of business. Consequently, a researcher or policy maker may need to ensure that DE's methodology is more detailed and transparent.

3.4. How Do the Three Disciplines Compare in Their Measurement of Performance?

Perhaps this is the most challenging area in comparing the three approaches. This is because while there are many examples of effective approaches to measuring SM projects [80,81] as well as CSR projects [67,82], as shown below, there seems to be a comparative paucity of such studies in DE. Thus, although there have been systematic attempts at demonstrating the effectiveness of DE, these tend to be either patchy or not systematically included [47,79].

There have been repeated calls regarding the need for developing tools for measuring the effectiveness of DE [47,83]. In 2001, McCollum and colleagues provided useful advice on measuring the impact of DE when they advised that demonstrating effectiveness should take the form of three questions with a view to clarifying why we are engaged in development education; determining the actions that need to be taken towards our goals; and demonstrating how we are going to plan, organise and manage our activities. A few years later, Annette Scheunpflug and Ida McDonnell [84] produced what may be seen as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) manifesto for the need to demonstrate the effectiveness of DE's work. In particular, they derived an evaluation cycle framework that was adapted from Stufflebeam and Shinkfield [85] that demonstrates the purpose and criteria for adequate evaluation. The framework is very similar to an action research framework which again supports the view that, just like SM, and arguably CSR, DE is best supported by an action-based type of research agenda. Storrs [47] has also articulated a very strong argument for the need to adopt evaluation tools, significantly including business-related ones, whilst addressing resistance to such adoption.

Nevertheless, it may be fair to say that, since the above advice was proffered, there is still a long way for the DE performance movement to go before it reaches a credible degree of maturity. This is because, despite large steps taken over the last couple of decades to demonstrate the effectiveness of DE initiatives, there is still a lot of ground to cover before a systematic strategy is adopted [79]. Such a strategy should not shy away from borrowing tools routinely from the best practice in any discipline as long as their relevance is made clear, together with any associated threats or limitations.

Perhaps a starting point for DE practitioners to help improve their methods is to review best practices, such as in the form of 'meta-analyses' (in the broadest sense), and derive an armamentarium of effective approaches, based on clear performance measurement tools, that could be emulated by others.

Notwithstanding the above arguments, it may be worth highlighting some possible causes of reluctance/hesitation on the part of some DE practitioners that may have slowed down the adoption of performance-related frameworks. Five have been identified in Table 4 shown below.

Indeed, all the above points appear to relate to each other. For instance, all points appear to have at their base cognitive (e.g., perception of educational evaluation), emotional (suspicion, fear) or behavioural (DE methodology) dimensions that may reflect a basic distrust of measurement-orientated methodologies. Accordingly, it may be appropriate to remind ourselves here that whilst blind humanism is ineffective, blind instrumentalism is misguided. Indeed, it was Paulo Freire [86] who suggested that the answer should not lie in the rejection of the machine (and the tools it may entail) but rather in the humanisation of man. Hence, while the human dimension should be the guide, both facets are needed for effective action.

In contrast to DE, both SM and CSR have produced many studies to determine the level of their impact. For instance, there have been plenty of studies evaluating the benefits of commitment to CSR by companies [82]. Despite arguments about contexts and 'specific effects', the general trend is that CSR has a substantial positive impact on the company and its stakeholders that goes beyond an improved bottom line [87]. Likewise, SM too has offered plenty of evidence demonstrating its effectiveness [44].

The above focus on the measurement of performance criterion highlighted some differences in viewing this criterion by the three disciplines. It seems that while CSR and

SM have embraced 'methodological eclecticism' guided primarily by the effectiveness of performance evidence they demonstrate, there still remain elements of suspicions towards performance-based projects in DE. Clearly, if there are areas that may not be easily measured, such an argument may be qualified with the need to be cautious with any evidence. If the "instrumentalization of education" may sacrifice some higher aims, this too can be challenged through empirical/rational evidence. However, rejecting all attempts at systematic measurement may not be the way forward. It is believed that as the concept of KPIs (key performance indicators) becomes more common at universities, the issue of measurement of performance should lead to fewer objections.

Table 4. Causes that may discourage DE practitioners' adoption of performance-related frameworks.

1. Suspicion towards 'business-related' tools which may be seen as the tools of the 'neoliberal enemy'. This may be a strawman argument since SM demonstrated that neoliberal commercially focused tools can also be adopted as long as they reflect the principles of the selected discipline.
2. Reservations about many educational measurement initiatives that tend to restrict the educational enterprise to no other purpose than preparing the learner for a job. This argument is akin to 'throwing the baby with the bath water' as it seems to suggest doing away with important evidence-based tools just because they have been used by 'the wrong ideology'.
3. DE studies tend to be more about the critical, interpretive nature of initiatives rather than focusing on empirical support. Such an approach seems to value more critical reflection without developing the tools to operationalise the selected aims.
4. DE tends to focus primarily on specific, unique contexts that prevent comparison. Clearly, this is again a strawman argument that suggests that one cannot learn and extrapolate from a piece of study as there can never be some common ground between situations. The argument should be more in the form of learning from the unique situation while being cautious in the light of contextual differences.
5. Another reason, referred to earlier [47], is the fear of evaluation. This may be due to some of the above-listed reasons as evaluation appears to have been associated with "all things negative".

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This conceptual paper contrasted three disciplines (DE, CSR and SM), selected for their socially focused outlook. It explored similarities and differences between them with a view to deriving advice that can support learners, researchers and practitioners, including policy makers, regarding not only their respective contributions but also their strengths and weaknesses.

Following the development of the argument for the need for such multidisciplinary approaches to help bring more robust understanding and solutions to generally multi-faceted health, economic, social and environmental problems, it proceeded to contrast the three disciplines at several levels that would clarify their respective nature and approach.

Given the large amount of available information relating to each of the disciplines, the paper does not claim to be comprehensive in covering all available material or arguments on the issues discussed. However, the main aim was to review some of the key arguments for the advocated multidisciplinary approach, backed up by informed feedback from representatives of each of the three disciplines, with a view to developing a framework that can guide future work on social problems. Indeed, one of the aims of the paper is to start a mutually beneficial debate that would strengthen the respective perspectives of researchers, learners and practical social activists and policy makers operating in the three areas.

Overall, the similarities and differences observed among the three disciplines may be summarised as shown in Table 5, below.

Table 5. Derived characteristics showing degrees of alignment between the three disciplines.

	Primary Aims	Research Philosophy	Scope of Targeted Population	Research Approach	Primary Tools	Performance Measurement
DE	Human rights and global justice	Critical realism	Organisational, social and individual; local and international	Action research; critical literacy	Primarily educational tools	Generally broad
SM	Social and environmental good	Critical realism	Organisational, social and individual; possibly international, depending on scope of project	Action research, supported by SMART targets; some critical literacy	Eclectic	Specific and systematic
CSR	Economic, social and environmental (triple bottom line)	Critical realism	Organisational (primarily)	Action research supported by SMART targets; limited critical literacy	Eclectic	Specific and systematic

Note: SMART is a generally referred to business acronym that stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

The table suggests that all three disciplines include social concerns, reflecting human welfare and development, as a necessary aim of their respective purposes. At a philosophical/critical level, DE has more developed traditions, emanating from a comparatively much longer history of studies on educational goals to create a more just and equal society. At a methodological level, DE also has a longer tradition of undertaking in-depth analyses that adopt a variety of qualitative approaches.

CSR and particularly SM have plenty of hard-fact systematic approaches borrowed from the fields of marketing and business management. They tend to be more eclectic in approach, with a view to maximising the effect of their programmes, and are highly sensitive to demonstrating their effectiveness. There is no surprise here given their 'business tradition' that would strongly discourage investing in any activity without clear evidence demonstrating its effectiveness, the so-called 'expected return on investment'.

One of the ways in which SM and CSR can benefit from DE is the strong awareness of the effect of early education on the attitudes of pupils and, later on, adults. DE is very well aware of the concept of power and its insidious effects on our societies. In particular, DE does not withhold from questioning how such powers can be reflected through a number of institutions including what may be called the triple domination bottom line of media, finance and political hegemony. DE would provide the critical ability that goes beyond the here-and-now finding of solutions. DE encourages bold questioning such as "why some crimes go 'legally' unpunished while lesser criminals may spend years behind bars" (consider the irresponsible behaviour of financial executives associated with the onset of the last economic recession). DE has a tradition of helping change perceptions about groups of people that may have been at the receiving end of great injustice [88–93]. DE also aims to highlight the double standards adopted by the media depending on who is at the receiving end when injustices are committed. DE's aim is not to take sides but to highlight the dangers of injustice for future generations and help develop programmes that are based on genuine respect for 'the other'. DE also can lead in the identification and development of what it means to be a global citizen and advises on the future skills that will be needed by future generations to help mitigate against the current inequities of the world. One of the ways to do that is to look beyond the confines of one's discipline to help move the justice agenda forward to counter, among others, the "retreat into economic nationalism" [30]. Clearly, such a retreat can take several other forms, including political, socio-cultural, environmental, legal and even academic dimensions. The latter, academic retreat, may refer to 'departmental/disciplinary isolations' that prevent cross-disciplinary work, hence making it very hard to adopt more concerted and effective approaches to complex problems [94].

Arguably, CSR, SM and DE mutually reinforce their projects, and any genuine social programme, at any level, would do well to consider all three dimensions to capitalise on their respective benefits. Hence, one way forward could be an integrative 'supra-level' framework that includes the three approaches. For example, an SM or CSR worker may consider the DE dimensions to inform the critical aspects and the value of a long-term approach to change through an effective education. As an example, projects that aim

to address cigarette smoking or responsibility towards the environment should not only be undertaken after people pick up the habits but also include preventative measures. Conversely, a DE worker could consider how to incorporate SM's proven procedures into her/his project. Accordingly, an integrative framework that capitalises on the wisdom derived from each approach can prove very helpful. Figure 2 below illustrates such a framework. In this illustrative example, a project manager may start by adopting Andreotti's 'Soft Versus Critical Approaches to Global Citizenship Education' on the DE side [75]. She identified 16 steps that differentiate the softer from the critical approach to assessing a problem. For example, if we look at addressing poverty or obesity, there is a difference between the soft approach that talks about "Lack of 'development', education, resources, skills, culture, technology, etc." versus the more critical approach that focuses on "Complex structures, systems, assumptions, power relations and attitudes, etc., that create and maintain the current situation" (note that poverty and obesity tend to be related). Clarifying the two perspectives may help determine two levels of support: 'external' and 'internal'. At the external level, the support focuses more on providing material and skill resources. At the internal level, the support is in terms of encouraging those involved with the problem (the 'stakeholders') to engage in honest introspective questioning to understand how each stakeholder may have been complicit (at least subconsciously) in helping maintain the problem. Armed with this approach, the project manager may help raise awareness for himself or herself and others about the dangers inherent in rushing too quickly with untested, potentially problematic assumptions (especially if shared with others) and missing the opportunity for a more in-depth understanding ('deconstructing') of the problem at hand. Once this preliminary step has been undertaken, then the next step of assessing and using the tools from CSR or SM may be more fruitfully (yet cautiously) used. Hence, while keeping in mind the more 'structural/systemic' causes of a current situation, tools such as Caroll's pyramid or one of the suggested SM plans may be used to help address the other dimensions of the problem. Caroll's pyramid would look at clarifying organisations' four levels of social and environmental accountability (economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic) to determine areas for improvements. In turn, SM would review the steps of the SM plan so as to derive a practical plan that systematically assesses the problem faced, the most vulnerable people associated with it and how they can be helped. It is worth noting that a successfully solved problem has several levels of success, ranging from simply raising awareness of it to helping people change it to, eventually, changing the local 'cultural' perceptions associated with it, from destructive to healthy ones (e.g., what was considered 'normal' compared to now). Such a latter change may help start shifting the 'structural causes' (systemic, perceptual or institutional causes) referred to above. For instance, while it was not only considered acceptable, but even seen as 'cool', to smoke publicly, there has been a shift in 'cultural perception' about smoking over recent decades. It is worth highlighting that the selection of relevant tools to apply to the addressed problem may too be subject to negotiation. One can envisage a cross-disciplinary team that works both top-down and bottom-up to identify and select the relevant disciplines and associated tools that may be adopted for the resolution of the issue at hand. Hence, the approach will be eclectic in character as what matters more is the resolution of the problem rather than insisting on discipline boundaries. The nature of the framework may change too, depending on the complexity of the problem at hand and the necessity for enlisting the support of representatives from several disciplines. Hence, although our framework has identified three disciplines, it is possible to keep options open about the opportunity for including other disciplines in the framework. However, the multidisciplinary contributions would need a prerequisite 'theoretically consistent eclecticism' with a representation/conceptualisation of the addressed problem (and associated issues) reflecting the interactions between the contributions of the various disciplines. The development of the supra-level framework can be co-designed with the representatives of the various disciplines so as to produce an integrated whole rather than a patchy assortment of disciplines and associated models and tools. Subsequently, the robustness of the framework may be empirically tested in light of

the effectiveness of the derived solution to the problem. The process is iterative but may also benefit from effective solutions developed elsewhere, in other projects, to determine what works.
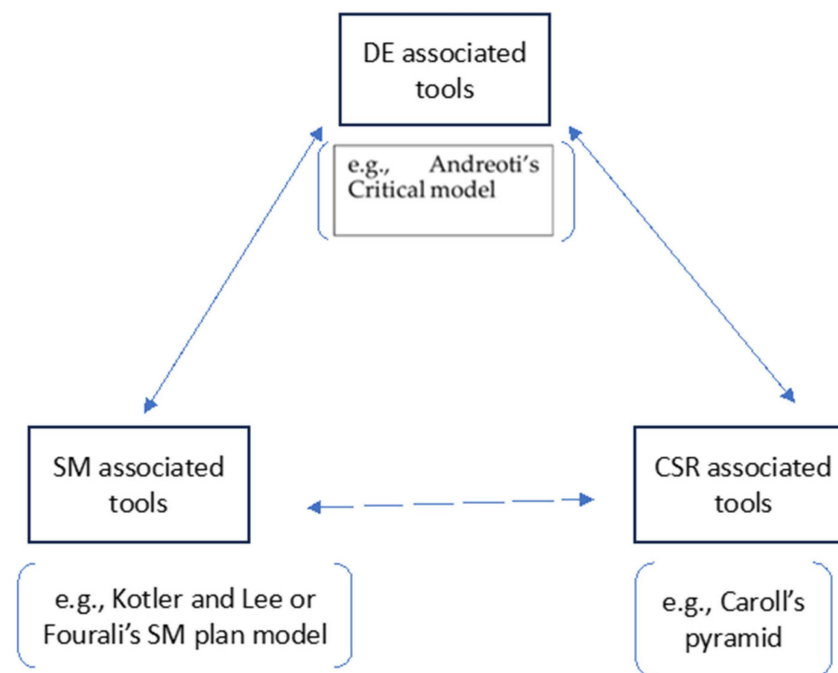

Figure 2. Example of a 'supra-level framework' for mutual learning incorporating the DE, SM and CSR perspectives.

The adoption of such integrative models can prove very handy in helping interrogate procedures for addressing a 'wicked' social/environmental issue with a view to identifying potential obstacles to resolving it. Taking another example, consider an 'SM project' that an organisation decides to initiate to improve diversity representation at senior levels. A DE perspective can help to critically review issues of both meanings as well as broader historical and environmental factors that appear to reinforce the current state of play. It may help highlight institutional discrimination as well as the current ingrained biased attitudes towards certain groups together with the psychological economic and cultural effects of discrimination. The SM perspective may provide guidance about how to systematically identify and tackle discrimination and co-design/derive (as well as learn from) best practices for successfully dealing with it. In turn, an effective CSR implementation requires going beyond tokenistic empty rhetoric and encourages practical solutions to the problem. Accordingly, as well as adopting transparent procedures, with outcome measurement guidelines, it must encourage authentic introspection at the executive level to consider if there may be 'institutional problems' at play. Moreover, and as argued before, several studies have highlighted the wider impact that work in each of the DE, CSR and SM disciplines has on the socio-economic development of targeted regions. Such an impact has been substantiated in education [21,95], CSR [22] and SM [23]. Hence, developing an approach that can harness the combined effect of the three disciplines, within a multidisciplinary framework, may have a much broader socio-economic impact.

Finally, it may be a truism to state that wicked, complex problems require solutions that reflect such complexity. Despite this, it is not unusual to see many research papers (not to mention general media) advocating 'unilateral solutions', based on one discipline's perspective. Consider the problem of wars. How many dimensions can be brought to bear to help solve a conflict? Several factors can be listed: economic, historical, cultural, religious, educational, geographical, legal, to mention just a few. Nevertheless, and despite such multifaceted reality, many a politician may put forward simplistic explanations that

may prove to be, in some cases repeatedly, woefully inadequate. Additionally, in such instances, the suggested solutions may even exacerbate the problem as they may lead to the victimisation of certain groups of people. Avicenna [96], the famous polymath of the Islamic golden age, also considered the father of early modern medicine, presented an eloquent statement to address this situation: "Width of life" "عرض الحياة أهم من طولها" is more important than length of life". In the context of our arguments, the author of this paper translates the Arabic quotation to mean "a more comprehensive and richer experience and understanding, using relevant methodologies that account for the richness (complexity) of the situation, helps us derive more robust solutions". Accordingly, this author believes that a more comprehensive approach to complex problems, as advocated in this paper, may help reverse many of the often-patchy proposed solutions, to provide a much better understanding of complex human problems and, consequently, offer more promising, long-term solutions for them, thereby helping make the world a better place.

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