



EAUC Continuing Professional Development Programme

Corporate Social Responsibility

Gaining Strategic Control & Establishing Consistent Leadership

University of Leicester - 14th October 2009

Workshop Group Contributions

□ Workshop exercise 2 - Identify more suitable FE & HE language for this area

(If we have agreed on what it is, what should we call it?)

- The reason WHY must be in the definition.
- 'Corporate' can't be in the definition, anywhere!
- 'Corporate' signifies large, overpowering, disconnected from learning and teaching.
- Research/learning/teaching should be in definition.
- We should use the same term as the new ISO 'Social Responsibility' standard.
- 'Responsibility' is KEY to the definition; it is the common link in all of the definitions.
- The risk in using 'Sustainability' is that it will be identified as only being about the environment.
- There could be confusion between CR Corporate Responsibility and CR Community Relations.
- Could use a description specific to each institution (like M&S 'Plan A') and tailor it to their purpose.
- All institutions are different, some relate to the idea of being corporate some don't.
- Universities don't think.....as single cohesive identities.
- The definition must be inclusive rather than exclusive, engaging everyone.
- What is the definition for? Who are the audiences? This should determine the appropriate language.
- The term must focus on the social role/impacts of Universities.
- There are differences in the role of Universities in different geographic areas and communities.

- All of the aspects involved in CSR are implicit in our institutions.
- By their very existence Universities are delivering on this agenda, but are not organised to capture or control the activity.
- We do all of this already.
- There is a large step between delivering on this agenda and leading it.
- We are attempting to deliver this operationally but not in the curriculum.
- We have an ability to influence society that should be delivering on this agenda.
- Many Universities (particularly the more established) have an expectation that they can/will effect changes in society but they are not connecting this ability/intent with CSR.
- We are not coherently engaging with the student body that already has a real connection with this agenda.
- Universities must start working directly with students to change understanding and behaviour across our society.
- We need to embed Sustainability across all areas of strategy; it should be in everything we do.
- Universities should/must lead on this agenda.

A definition proposed by one of the groups is....

“The ‘Social Responsibility’ of Universities & Colleges is to engage with our communities in a manner that changes/improves/advances the quality and development of our society.”

Workshop exercise 2 - Conclusion

There was overall agreement amongst the workshop groups that the term ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ was not useful or appropriate for use in association with Universities and Colleges. There is difficulty in identifying a common term for use by all institutions although ‘Social Responsibility’ as used by the ISO was identified as potentially useful. If this term is applied to revised definitions created at previous EAUC workshops we do perhaps get closer to an understanding that could be applied across the sector.

“Social Responsibility is the framework that defines institutional impacts on society and the environment.”

“Social Responsibility supports the cultural, ethical and economic structure of the institution and promotes the sustainable delivery of institutional & societal goals.”

There was also agreement that University and College leadership in this area was both appropriate, valuable to the institutions involved and absolutely required by society. This influential role is one that many Universities have occupied since their inception although it is no longer generally recognised as an explicit responsibility. However there was also recognition that in order to fulfil such a leadership role institutions would need to establish strategic control or strategic influence over the direction of their ‘Social Responsibility’ activity.

□ Workshop exercise 4 - Structure and Control

(What is the most appropriate Social Responsibility structure for FHE institutions?
How do you gain control?)

- Ownership of this agenda must be at governing body/institutional leadership level.
 - Ownership must be felt at all levels of the institution. Social Responsibility can be hosted in a number of departments but must be communicated as a university wide agenda.
 - There must be real commitment from leadership.
 - VC buy in is essential.
 - High level support is needed but must avoid a hierarchical approach.
 - A coherent and consistent understanding of Social Responsibility must be maintained across the University, particularly University leadership.
 - A governing structure is required to effect control.
 - Requires a high level steering group supported by specialist advisory groups with action taken and controlled by a senior working group (the 'doers')
 - Structure will be unique to each institution.
 - It is about governance, process & measurement not just ideas.
 - We must recruit academic support.
 - Communication is key but process is core.
 - Structure must be driven by who you are and what you stand for; the metrics we need should not be driven by UTC.
 - UTC should be the common measurement tool not the common structure.
 - How do we work SR into the existing structures, creating a new structure is not an option.
 - Marketplace' in UTC structure is least best fit.
 - More appropriate measurement systems (other than UTC) could/should be explored.
 - Control is about making choices.
 - Specific KPIs are required that feed the reporting mechanism.
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- We don't have the collection mechanism/strategic structure required.
 - There is an immediate need to go beyond the existing structures currently in use that tend to be based on just environmental impacts.
 - We are already doing things in areas other than environment but are not linking things up.
 - Universities identify themselves as existing 'for the good of society' but are underselling themselves and are not in control of the influence and impact they exert.
 - We must be able to prove the benefit of this behaviour (Social Responsibility)
 - Universities must recruit students and all staff into this process to establish trust in the institutional approach.
 - We need to take this agenda away from the enthusiasts/specialists and give it to the suits... (Institutions must engage those responsible for governance).
 - Whilst we are not in control of this agenda we can't expect to lead it.

Workshop exercise 4 - Conclusion

The structure of Workplace, Marketplace, Environment & Community, usually applied in the commercial sector to aid control in this area was identified by the Workshop groups as inadequate. Teaching and Learning must be at the centre of the structure for Social Responsibility for Universities and Colleges not just another additional theme. The difficulty in engaging academic staff in the UTC process could be attributed to the failure of the structure to appropriately recognise the FHE sector's role in our society.

The imposition of forms of structure and therefore control from other sectors is not likely to deliver either effective buy-in throughout the FHE sector or enable the development of effective sectoral leadership. Assessing the Social Responsibility / Sustainability performance of FHE institutions is more complex than just benchmarking their economic, social and environmental impacts. Each institutions performance will be unique due to their history, areas of specialism/focus, local community and other distinctive features. There are a number of existing assessment programs, e.g. People & Planet's Green League, that can inform the development of the most appropriate Institutional performance measurement, assessment & development tool.

The natural position of leadership that many of our Universities and Colleges already recognise and understand has not been applied to the area currently identified as Corporate Social Responsibility, Social Responsibility, or Institutional Sustainability. Clear leadership of approach and understanding must be provided by institutions in the FHE sector to enable our society to appropriately address the social, environmental and economic challenges we now face.

The groups identified that there was already a great deal of activity within individual institutions that could be described as Social Responsibility but that institutions were not in any form of strategic control of these, no doubt valuable, endeavours. This lack of structure often results in difficulties recruiting the commitment and understanding of members of staff across the institution. Internal and external recognition of this activity was also recognised as low and the potential advantages available to institutions therefore often reduced or even missed completely. The Groups highlighted that consistency of Social Responsibility performance was crucial in establishing and maintaining the trust of different stakeholder groups. This consistency required both a clear understanding, throughout the institution, of what Social Responsibility means for each institution and clear direction/control of how the institution intended to develop their Social Responsibility performance.

The workshop groups identified the informed commitment from University or College leadership as the most important factor in establishing appropriate direction and control for FHE institutions. Although the groups stressed that any process must gain the 'ownership' of the whole institution.

Institutional Strategic Plans were identified as an important tool in embedding Social Responsibility into all departments and functions within individual institution but most had not designed their Strategic Plans with Social Responsibility as an explicit and important area of delivery.

The gap or lack of overt connection, between institutional performance and the curriculum was identified as problematic. Providing courses that introduce students to the emerging and complex field of Social Responsibility and that inform understanding of the opportunity that this area represents was recognised as essential in effectively addressing current and future social, economic and environmental challenges. However, the challenge is not just to provide courses and modules on Social Responsibility & Sustainability but to align the content of all academic courses with the Social Responsibility performance of the institution itself and clearly exhibit an appropriate understanding of institutional impact management.

Sustainability Insight delivered the above training event on behalf of the EAUC www.eauc.org.uk

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Institutions must:

- Design and implement a stakeholder engagement strategy
 - Publicise the University/College's commitment to the Sustainability agenda
 - Clarify the University/College's Mission, Vision & Values
 - Perform a review of existing University/College CR/S performance
 - Establish priorities for the University/College and define the drivers & motivating factors
 - Create an Action Plan for delivery in this area
 - Establish the goals and measurement mechanisms appropriate for the University/College
 - Design the communication strategy to support the Action Plan
 - Create the review mechanism to identify future development.
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□ Workshop exercise 8 - Institutional Mission, Vision & Values

(Are they appropriate mechanisms in the HE & FE Sector? Do they have any value?)

- Mission, Vision & Values must belong to the whole institution.
 - Important to engage whole institution in developing or reaffirming the M, V&Vs.
 - Values underpin Vision & Mission.
 - Without values there are no principles on which to make decisions.
 - M, V&Vs help clarify what is expected from staff.
 - Not delivering on values undermines institutional credibility.
 - Vision must create excitement.
 - Different institutional departments can develop their own implicit values when institutional values either not communicated or supported or not evident. (This will reduce consistency)
 - Our M, V&Vs should differentiate this sector.
 - This is perhaps easier for smaller institutions but it is even more important for larger institutions.
 - M, V&Vs are easier to engage professional support staff than members of academic staff.
 - Academic staff may feel allegiance to subject area rather than institution.
 - The role of institutional M, V&Vs are critical in making SR an integral part of operations.
 - The Strategic Plan can fulfil a similar role in informing Stakeholders when M, V & Vs are not expressed explicitly.
 - There could be a challenge between the interests of the institution and the interests of academic staff if V, M&Vs do not engage everyone in the institution.
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- We are good at this, but we need to be.
 - Universities and Colleges are typically adept at empowering staff with an understanding of institutional vision although this process is often informal and not one that the institution controls overtly.
 - Most University staff will share a common understanding of why the institution exists and its overall aims.
 - The current and future funding environment requires clarity of M, V&Vs to ensure efficient use of resources and clarity of direction.

Workshop exercise 8 - Conclusion

There was agreement within the workshop that Universities and Colleges were generally good at identifying and sharing a collective vision and mission within the institution. However this was not a process that was commonly strategically controlled. A number of the institutions attending the workshop had recently or were currently applying processes to ensure staff engagement with their M, V&Vs. There was also recognition that institutional policies and delivery processes must consistently reflect these institutional M, V&Vs.

□ Workshop exercise 9 - Strategic control & leadership

(What actions must/will you now take?)

- Actions/workshops/training/briefings to ensure Senior Management buy-in.
 - Briefing of VC/other institutional leadership on the importance/opportunity of SR.
 - Identify the 'wins' and 'risks'.
 - Review institutional policies and delivery processes.
 - Are values embedded/aims achieved?
 - Are policies coherent/appropriate?
 - Review implementation plans – do they deliver on SR agenda?
 - Recruit others to take actions (complex process to initiate change) need senior buy-in.
 - Reassess the Strategic Plan – does SR exist within the plan, is there a benefit in adopting/establishing a common language.
 - Identify drivers – where are we/where do we want to be on the SR lifecycle?
 - Internal audit to assess position on SR lifecycle.
 - Relate SR to Strategic Plan and identify the 'fit'.
 - Develop the SR solution for presentation to new VC.
 - Identify the resources required to appropriately address SR.
 - Create the SR framework to enable Middle Management to both engage and take ownership of SR for the institution.
 - Utilise the UTC results as part of a suite of mechanisms, including the strategic plan, to identify/prioritise areas for improvement/change.
 - Review the value of UTC for the institution.
 - Create an action plan to gain agreement that SR is within our business responsibilities/is an appropriate agenda for the institution.
 - Gain control.
 - Identify the SR indicators within institutional KPIs and highlight to Board.
 - Do the wider UTC not just environmental.
 - Create overall strategy plan for SR development.
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- SR is a key motivator for staff.
 - Our local community must be one of the strongest drivers.
 - UTC must be aligned with the FHE sector timetable.
 - Need corporate objectives to be visible to the Board.
 - Getting recognition of the significance of Sustainability/SR at a strategic level rather than just an operational level is very important.
 - Links with other universities and their SR strategy would help the development of the area.
 - The real challenge is engaging the unengaged.

Workshop exercise 9 - Conclusion

Unfortunately the issues we face as a society and as part of a wider global community that include; climate change, increasing levels of poverty, reducing equality of opportunities, increased resource consumption and increasingly negative environmental impacts require a radical improvement of the Corporate Responsibility performance, or more appropriately for the FHE sector, Social Responsibility performance of our public and private sector organisations.

In order to ensure the degree of organisational change required we must address the misunderstandings and uncertainties associated with this area. The FHE sector is ideally and uniquely placed to address this challenge and gain recognition as providing leadership of understanding to their students and the wider community on organisational/institutional impact management.

There are opportunities for Universities and Colleges and for the FHE sector as a whole to achieve positions of leadership in Social Responsibility but this would require effort to develop the understanding of the reality and opportunity of Social Responsibility in the FHE sector. Universities and Colleges are already well positioned to seize this opportunity although, in order to step up to the challenge of leadership, Universities and Colleges will need to exhibit action, delivery and in particular control beyond current performance levels.

Many Universities and Colleges are, in fact, already performing well on what could be described as Social Responsibility behaviours as a natural part of their operations but are failing to recognise these behaviours either as Social Responsibility or as meriting positive recognition.

Recognition of leadership in Social Responsibility will develop into an important institutional advantage when future funding restrictions and reducing research opportunities begin to impact the FHE sector. However, the greatest advantage to an institution in gaining strategic control of Social Responsibility is in empowering staff to effectively, efficiently and consistently deliver the strategic and operational goals of the institution.

There are identifiable steps that an institution must take, in a specific order, to gain control of Social Responsibility and deliver consistent, appropriate and effective results. The approach an institution takes should be identifiable by staff, students, funding organisations and other stakeholders as not only appropriate but as the embodiment of the institutions Vision, Mission and Values.

Agreement, in particular, within institutional leadership but also throughout the institution on the reality of Social Responsibility, what SR means for that specific institution and why it is an appropriate area to manage or control is essential. How an institution achieves and maintains this understanding is pivotal to the ongoing success of the institutional approach to SR.