

Report of AIESEC's Leadership for Sustainability Conference

On the 25th January, AIESEC in Mainland of China held a conference for 150 of China's leading students; increasing their awareness of Sustainable Development (SD) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and providing them with the knowledge, tools and inspiration to be responsible leaders.

Contents

Agenda	1
Results of preliminary survey	2
Feedback from organisations delivering the workshops	3
Feedback from students in the forum	4
Feedback from students after the event	5

Agenda

There were 2 keynote speeches. Jeanne Ng, from CLP Power and on the Young Managers Team of the WBCSD, spoke about a young manager's perspective on SD and the personal challenges we face in being sustainable. Li Lilai, from LEAD China, spoke about the importance of Leadership in SD and about the qualities needed by young leaders.

There were 14 workshops during the day, of which the students could attend 4 of them (as they were running parallel in 4 separate blocks). The workshops were:

Microsoft – Responsibility to community

Shell – Engaging with stakeholders

BP and WWF – The EEI: A corporate, NGO and government partnership

Technology Ventures – What makes a sustainable business?

Bayer – How do you implement CSR in a Multinational?

EU-China EMCP – How do you build a sustainable business in China?

KfW – The Millennium Development Goals and their implementation in china

PACT – NGOs in China and strengthening their capacity

ERM – Social Pressures on business

Sinosphere – Managing supply chains in China

APCO – stakeholder communication

K. Larsen (ERM) – Leadership in CSR

CLP Power – The business case for CSR

D.Driscoll (Peking University) – Human Rights

We believe this is the first attempt in Mainland China to organise such an event, with the purpose of providing an all-round view on SD. Although some leading Universities run some short courses related to CSR and business ethics or specific courses on the environment for example, very few provide an all round perspective that includes interaction with those dealing with these issues.

Many organisations were keen to participate in the event, realising the importance of increasing awareness of this topic amongst such a key audience. There was great interest from the students in attending. There were several participants from AIESEC in Hong Kong as well as from other AIESEC countries including Germany, Australia and Canada.

A survey was undertaken at the event, the results of which will form part of a forthcoming publication to be released in partnership with Sinomonitor International; on youth, leadership and Sustainability.

More details are available online: www.aiesec.org –China, Mainland of. Or contact adam.lane@aiesec.net

Results of Preliminary survey

A survey of a representative sample of 40 of our members was undertaken in November 2004, in order to provide input into our activities. The results will be fully covered in the upcoming publication, however a brief summary is as follows:

- 20 students had heard of CSR, and knew what it stood for. 12 of these had only heard of CSR because of AIESEC.

Whose responsibility is CSR?

- Local government and National government should both take responsibility for sustainability and educating people about sustainability, but neither are doing enough.
- International organisations should take slightly less responsibility for both, and are doing a better job (but still not enough).
- Foreign Multinationals, Large Chinese companies and SMEs should all take as much responsibility for sustainability as International organisations.
- They should take less responsibility in educating about sustainability. Foreign Multinationals were doing the best job in this.
- When asked which stakeholder groups are most important to a company, Consumers were 1st, employees 2nd, shareholders and environment joint 3rd and community 4th. However only half thought it was 'very important' to care about the last 3 groups. Few rated any of them 'quite important' or lower.
- Charities should definitely take more responsibility for providing education about sustainability, and half of those who thought this, thought they were doing enough.
- When asked why a company cares about CSR, there was an equal split between 'It's good business' and 'It's a nice thing to do'

Any effect on choice of career?

- Unsurprisingly, 2/3rds of students's 1st choice for a career was with an International business, with 1/6th choosing International government.
- ¼ chose Chinese business as their 2nd choice and next highest was split between international government and research organisations.
- Least popular was split equally between local government and a charity. SOEs were marginally more popular than national government.
- When choosing an employer the most important aspect, by a long way, was Learning and Development Opportunities offered. Next was a company's values, closely followed by the company's image and the job itself. Surprisingly the salary was not rated any more important than the other aspects.
- A company's products and benefits offered were rated as least important...however in a separate question 100% said the reputation of a company affects whether the students would buy their products.
- ¾ of the students found out about a company through talking to friends in the company; as much as used the internet to do their research.
- Although only 1 student would work for a company with a bad reputation for their impact on the environment or how they treat their employees, and only another 2 would change their mind if paid 20% more than the average salary, over half would work for such a company if the Learning & Development opportunities were really good (in addition to the extra salary)

Knowledge of sustainability

- On knowledge on topics related to Sustainability:
 - Illiteracy and education was best known followed by the environment and then energy issues; 1/3rd of students could talk about these for 30 minutes
 - Still over 1/2 could talk for at least 10 minutes on poverty, population and health issues. Less than 1/2 on transparency.
 - Fewer than a 1/3rd could talk about human rights for more than a few minutes and the role of finance and investment was least understood
 - Most students could talk about all the topics for at least a few minutes
- On which of these topics are most urgent today:

- 1st choice was poverty and education, closely followed by population and then environment
- Closer analysis including what was 2nd, 3rd and 4th choices etc however clearly show that:
 - The environment is the most important issue
 - Poverty and Health come a distant joint 2nd
 - Corruption/transparency and education are closely in 3rd and 4th
 - Energy and population come further back in 4th and 5th
 - Human Rights is only just more important than investment in stock markets and new companies

Conclusions

- Despite its limitations this provides the context of today's discussions.
- 92% of students think they need to know more about these issues now and 97% think they will need to know more about these issues in the future. 97% want to know more about these issues now.

Feedback

During the forum at the end of the afternoon, more organisations attended in order to speak with, and hear the student's views on what they had learned during the day. They felt this was a unique and interesting opportunity; they were also able to network amongst themselves. The purpose of this report is to provide an opportunity for those who did not attend to find out what happened, in particular to find out what the students said during the event. For more information, please contact Adam Lane on adam.lane@aiasec.net.

-From Organisations delivering workshops or attending the forum

They [the students] were so enthusiastic and engaged in the exercise. I like the idea of engaging students through carrying out a task. The exercise we had (to develop a communication plan for EEI from business perspective and NGO perspective) was actively participated by the students. **Catherine Zhang, BP**

I found remarkable the eagerness of the Chinese students to learn more about issues being presently debated internationally, to become part of that discussion. I also admired how the conference was organized by you and the students relying completely on their own limited means. **Christoph Isenmann, KfW**

Thanks for organizing so wonderful workshop for intelligent and excellent students, and I am sure they will be leading the mainstream of Chinese society's activities in the future. All of the workshops are very interesting and my colleagues and I also learned so much from some of them, in this point, I definitely also want to say thanks for you and your volunteers. **Jufang Zhang, PACT China**

I enjoyed the conference very much--the students were exceptionally enthusiastic. They really engaged with the material and challenged each other. **Felicia Pullam, APCO**

As a fellow AIESEC Alumni, I found the experience of working with Chinese business, science and humanities students to come up with solutions to real social problems I presented them with faced by businesses operating in China to be most rewarding. AIESEC created an excellent environment for building understanding of the social issues faced by firms in site construction (impact assessment and resettlement), exporting (working conditions) and strategy (CSR reporting and programme development) and ERM was proud to be involved in such a conference. **Kate Larsen, ERM**

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be there! I had a great experience and I really hope that we have inspired a few more future SD/CSR ambassadors. **Jeanne Ng, CLP Holdings**

I want to tell you that I was so impressed by the very well organized forum. From the warm and active reaction of the students I could tell that you had a very successful conference and the students learnt a lot from it. **Lai Qi, UNIDO**

-From Students in the forum

Today, Bayer's workshop motivated me to think about how to behave and how to put CSR into practise in real life.

Today, we found out that a lot of NGOs in China focus on CSR or SD issues and we are glad to hear this, but when we normally talk about NGOs we are concerned that their management and knowledge levels are still quite basic: they raise a lot of funds, maybe plant some trees, but there is little impact on society. I am lucky that today I met an NGO [PACT] that focuses on increasing the management level of other NGOs. I hope that we can see a higher ROI [Return on Investment] by NGOs in future programmes.

Next time, if we have such workshops, I would like to know more about how educational institutes in China –what role they play in CSR issues and do they put much effort into bringing this issue to young leaders in China.

In the BP and WWF workshop, about NGO-corporate-government partnership, I learned what 'walk-the-talk' is. For me, personally, CSR is just a conception, just at the talking level. But in this workshop I really learned how I can practise CSR. Because personally I am studying media, I have learnt about Public Relations and I am very interested in education, so this workshop gave me some ideas about how to align CSR and education related to my course. It has made me think more about the relationships between corporations and communities, so we can really 'walk-the-talk' in the future.

Today I learnt that CSR is not only about philanthropy, it should be about philosophy. I also learnt that implementing CSR is a challenge for the corporate world because it is really difficult to balance the interests of different stakeholders.

I would like to thank Jeanne [from CLP Holdings delivering the first keynote speech] for giving me a new idea about SD. She said that SD is a kind of lifestyle, not just a word. It's a kind of philosophy (and its new for me to think of SD in this way), it's a lifestyle, the way you live your life and it's a philosophy in your mind.

Today, I see the future and gain confidence in SD. I major in environmental economics, which is very related to SD. What depresses me is my classmates who said that: "Yes, SD is good, but it is not practical –it is like a star in the sky that you can see but not touch" –they study this major but will not do SD in their future! This makes me sad, but today I learnt that I can tell my classmates that we CAN realise SD and that CSR is a way to make SD come true.

Today I saw a vision on holism; that CSR is not just about valuing profits, but about something much more holistic. Kate [Larsen, from ERM], you really inspired me by telling me to be a mosquito. You said if you think you are too small to make a change, then you have not shared a bed with a mosquito. CSR is not so far away, it is just in your lifestyle.

I heard about CSR, but I didn't think a company can do so much –today I learnt a lot from the workshops that I didn't expect and it impressed me. I learned a lot about CSR today, but I was learning about other issues too. I learned a lot about leadership and I think I now know how to do CSR practically and I hope I can do so.

It made me really understand much more about SD and CSR. Felicia [from APCO] said CSR is not possible without good communication. Not only did we learn what communication is, she let me feel it. She held the session in a very lively way.

I am from Honk Kong and I feel there is a great difference between Hong Kong and Beijing students. I know that Human Rights is a controversial issue in China and it is better that students in China are so concerned about this issue. I was deeply impressed by the concern of the AIESEC students in this session on the issue of human rights.

I enjoyed all my workshops today, in particular the one on stakeholder communication from APCO. I think sometimes it is not that we do not have common interests, but that we don't know how to

communicate them and let others know about them so we can share those common interests. From the human rights workshop I think that CSR and human rights are one and the same thing. Before I thought CSR was about corporates donating to society, now I realise human rights is a part of CSR and that corporations should also take care of the welfare of its employees.

Sometimes you have to look at CSR from different perspectives. The thing I really loved at this conference and what I really appreciated is some of the diversity, or at least I thought some of the sessions were quite diverse because you do have to look at it from many different perspectives as there is not 1 way to solve problems.

I feel myself so small and I can do so little to do something to stop that [deforestation]. Today I see so many faces and so many people who share the same idea and thoughts as me, and what is more important, a practical way of doing something... I have always been a believer in the saying "you may say I am a dreamer, but I am not the only one".

I remember 1 speech in the morning: without awareness, change will not happen. I want to ask, do you think that our classmates lack responsibility or willingness? I do not think so –they are willing, but they lack the awareness and they did not have this opportunity to get to know and learn how to take responsibility –or how important it is that they do. So today's conference, I think we aiesecers all have obtained this awareness. I hope that everyone will take 1 step more to impact 1 person around them to let them know what is the responsibility, let them know how to make china, how to achieve better results for china in the future. Cause only a small group of chinese students have this opportunity to know this kind of super stuff.

-From Students after the event

What was the best thing about the day?

Very intense learning, not a minute was wasted

Knowing a lot of information about CSR, especially from a company's perspective

Asking questions to the lady from PACT about NGOs

Every speech and workshop offers me a possibility of sustainable development by stating a practical method on fields they are working in.

What did you like about the workshops you attended?

The case studies were very exciting

Case study about CSR –very interesting

It involved us in making strategies

The lecturer was quite impressive and passionate, although the topic may have less relevance to CSR, but the points were quite good

The dialogue between a conservation NGO and big energy company: the form made us feel our involvement in their practices

The useful materials given

It gave us a whole picture of CSR. Terrific!

It was really a exciting lecture. I understood why we need to develop sustainably and how to put it into practise.

The lady from PACT gave us lots of time to ask questions

Very practical ways which offered me a new kind of thinking

What can be improved for the workshops you attended?

Need the materials beforehand and copies of cases, because its hard to listen

I want more time for listening and discussing

Longer

More CSR relevance

Less information, more time for discussion

More time for networking

In partnership with

