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*Participative education in the area of iCSR (integrated Corporate
Social Responsibility)*

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Abstract

A new concept of very interactive, e-based and participative university education (teaching) has been recently introduced at the University of Stuttgart, Germany, in the area of iCSR (integrated Corporate Social Responsibility). The main parts of the concept are (a) conventional lecturing (b) brainstorming sessions among the students, (c) web-based surveys performed by the students on “hot” iCSR issue/topics, and (d) direct contacts/visits to the main stakeholders – in the particular case: industry, organizations (including NGOs), governmental bodies and agencies, European Commission (EU) and European Parliament. The concept has been implemented in the iCSR courses usually attended by 10-20 students per academic year (different orientation – from social/political sciences to engineering). The main focus has been on the management of technological risks and the handling of innovations. Apart from the students, the course involves up to several hundreds stakeholders in the area of iCSR. In the last two academic year the activity and its results have raised a lot of interest and led to direct support by, e.g. large industry (Bayer, BASF, Ernst & Young, ...). Of particular interest were the results related to “hot iCSR topics” such as climate change, energy security supply, intercultural aspects of work in “global” companies, and iCSR and terrorist threats in working environment (company security). The students learned how to assess and interpret the differences in the opinions of stakeholders’ groups ranging from corporate executives over union members, government officials to entrepreneurs. These and other examples are highlighted in the paper.

corporate social responsibility, EU, participative education, e-learning

*Participative education in the area of iCSR (integrated Corporate
Social Responsibility)*

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an increasingly important element of policies and practices in business and the society. It has been clearly recognized that a consistent CSR strategy based on a long-term approach offers both business benefits to corporations and positive contributions to civil society as a whole. Extending the concept to its broadest societal limits, including the technology, business and governance aspects, leads to the concept of “iCSR” i.e. to the concept of “integrated Corporate Social Responsibility”. In practice it means that by putting together the "classical" CSR with the relevant technology and financial aspects can significantly improve sustainability of long-term CSR strategies and their successful implementation. So for instance, for the CSR issues related to new technologies like nanotechnologies, new energy technologies (CO₂ sequestration, hydrogen, wind...) the social aspects cannot be separated from the technology-related aspects of HSE (Health, Safety, Environment), “integrated” risk management issues and/or “the emerging” risks.

These additional aspects are included into the University of Stuttgart course offered by "ZIRN - Interdisciplinary Research Unit on Risk Governance and Sustainable Technology Development" (ZIRN, 2008) iCSR course focuses on:

- Key elements of the iCSR and how these elements function as an integrated system
- How iCSR should be practically embedded into corporate and / or country business strategy and daily practice (iCSR methodologies and tools)
- The technology related aspects as a part of the modern practices industry
- Analysis / comparison of the practices in the EU, US and other countries

- Relevant data and information on best practices world-wide, including a number of relevant case studies from the key industries to main sources of relevant data information
- Hands-on examples and projects using interactive and on-line course materials, also from external sources (e.g. the World Bank, large companies, NGO's...)

The iCSR Course: conventional lecturing

The conventional lecturing at ZIRN covers (but is not limited to) the following main topics considered necessary for thorough understanding of the iCSR today:

- iCSR Main Concepts:
providing an introduction to CSR and highlighting the key benefits that sound CSR policies can bring to all stakeholders. In particular, the relationship between responsibility and conformance/compliance (Figure 1), on one side and performance and competitiveness, on the other side is tackled. The part includes also the CSR transition from “charity” to the “socially responsible investment” i.e. from a “poverty alleviation measure” to global “multi-stakeholder partnerships”.
- iCSR Decision-Making Framework:
looks at the different recognized frameworks in the field, in particular these developed and applied by, e.g., IRGC (Renn, Walker, 2008) or the CSR Diamond World Bank Institute approach (WBI, 2008) as comprehensive tools for systematic analysis of complex CSR issues.
- iCSR and innovation (Figure 2):
responsible innovation as a guarantee of the sustainable growth is considered to

be of a particular interest for the students in Europe. The rationale is that lack of acceptance can kill even the best and the most advanced technology.

Consequently, if the EU goal is to be the world leading knowledge-based society it has to ensure that the technologies and products made in the EU, on which leadership is based, are accepted by stakeholders in industry and society. This acceptance can be reached only if the stakeholders are convinced that possible or perceived emerging risks related to these technologies can be managed in safe, responsible and transparent way.

➤ iCSR and emerging risks:

the term emerging risks refers to new and/or increasing risks, as defined by EU-OSHA (2005), OECD (2003) and ETPIS (2008). Under emerging technological risks primarily those related to new technologies are tackled. Their treatment is understood in the context of “integrated risk management” (iNTeg-Risk, 2008).

➤ iCSR and the EU:

deals with integrating the iCSR into EU legislation, Standardization (in cooperation with DIN), policies, projects and actions – CSR as added value and the “trademark” of the products “made in the EU”.

➤ Specific issues of and within iCSR:

Examples like inter-cultural differences and their management in large international projects, sustainability and competitiveness of iCSR and the “business case for CSR”, HSE policies, risk-based inspection and management of industrial plants (RBI, RCM), are tackled in this part. Optimizing and tuning the iCSR through use of advanced decision-making techniques (FB-AHP), data

management (data warehouses and data mining), knowledge management, soft computing (fuzzy clustering, neural networks), management of uncertainties are specifically emphasized, as well the management of the CSR projects.

The concept has been implemented in the courses usually attended by 10-20 students per academic year. The students are from different orientations normally ranging from social/political sciences over economy to engineering. At the end of the course participants are well acquainted with the fundamental rationale, design and implementation of CSR programs and are able to incorporate CSR into their practical work, e.g. in the web-based surveys or direct contact to the stakeholders.

Brainstorming sessions and practical work

The brainstorming sessions are usually carried out by “triggering” them using an event, statement or exhibit which would draw the students’ attention anyway. Events, being a breaking political or other news (e.g. energy shortage, oil-price peaks, industrial accidents, corruption or fraud cases...) are usually a very good pre-text for opening a brainstorming session the purpose of which is to highlight the iCSR issues possibly related to the very event and its political, social, business, governance, technological or other “environment”. The statements, e.g. made by the politicians and or other public persons, causing controversies (e.g. the statements made around Olympic Games and their sponsoring), normally do not fail in triggering vivid discussions. As exhibits, usually a “bold” photo, article from a newspaper, a newly published or less known book or short video can do very well.

Once the brainstorming starts, the purpose is to lead it towards a practical action: e.g. a survey to be made or people to be contacted. At the beginning of the course, the useful

introduction to the main topic can be achieved by the analyzing / extending / improving practices in references cases.

Web-based surveys performed by the students on “hot” iCSR issue/topics

The surveys

Based on the results of the above brainstorming the students usually concentrate onto the issues of their particular interest and define these topics more in detail. Normally, two student would deal with the same topic and at least one student or a “dedicated couple” would take care of the practical (e.g. IT) support to the couples performing the respective surveys.

Examples of the surveys are listed in Table 2. The results clearly show that as the course has established the readiness to respond to students’ questions has increased: from roughly 10-15 on average answers in the first year, in 2007-08 the level has stabilized at approx. 50. The reasons for this have not been investigated, but it can be assumed that over the time

- The students’ proficiency in working on survey has capitalized on the preceding work
- The tool used for the surveys has performed better and/or
- The responding to the survey has been perceived as a part of the stakeholders’ social responsibility – i.e. that they understood that by answering the questionnaires they would also demonstrate their own respective sense for the CSR.

The tool

The tool used for the students’ work is a dedicated, own-development based tool, allowing to:

- Create interactively the questionnaire (no limitations in number of questions, participants or duration of the survey) – collaborative authoring possible;
- Manage the mailing lists of the prospective target participants in the survey(selection out of the existing database with 8,000+ names plus additional specific names relevant for the given subject were used);
- Follow the performance of the survey (i.e. responses!) on the day-to-day basis on-line (Appendix I);
- On-line evaluate the results of the survey (Appendix I): apart from the usual statistical analysis of the data, including the full-scale graphics support (all web-based), the tool has the possibility to be linked with the data mining tools and libraries – the link towards DataEngine™ (2008) is built in. The latter allows using analysis based on, e.g., neural networks and/or fuzzy theory.

Direct contacts/visits to the main stakeholders

Following the above evaluation and analysis the students would, in a general case, present their results to the interested stakeholders, usually on site, in their own premises. In the course of the academic years 2006/07 and 2007/08 the students got the support from the sponsors and were able to visit the main stakeholders in

- European Commission (DG Enterprise and DG RTD), Brussels
- European Parliament, Brussels
- Industry (e.g. Bayer AG, BASF, EnBW...)

and discuss the main issues directly with them. This type of action came out to be of a particular interest not only for the students, but also for the respective stakeholders

Conclusions

Current presented above is a good basis for further development of the concept and its practical use in the future development and work in the area of iCSR. This will concentrate onto the following main issues:

- KPIs (key performance indicators) as a tool form making iCSR more measurable, tangible and comparable – a particular direction in this field are the indicators dealing with safety (SPI – safety performance indicators), as the it becomes more and more clear (Jovanovic, 2008) that “the safe operation, in terms of protection of human health, safety of people and assets, protection of the environment, is one of the main proof of the overall CSR awareness of an industrial company”;
- Embedding the iCSR aspects in overall risks analysis (“integrated approach”), especially to emerging risks. In this effort the newly approved (20 million € budgeted) FP7 project iNTeg-Risk “Early Recognition, Monitoring, and Integrated Management of Emerging, New Technology related Risks” will provide provide a strong contribution to the consolidated “socially responsible” EU response to the risks related to the development, introduction and use of new technologies. Based on the 17 well-defined practical applications a common concept (framework) which will be developed and tested by a consortium of over 80 leading European partners; the iCSR aspects will be included in virtually all steps of this project.
- Embedding iCSR it into the new standardization concepts has been already initiated with the national (in Germany DIN) and EU (CEN) standardization bodies. As from fall 2008 DIN will promote the iCSR lecture to one of the

“embassies of standardization at the universities” and at the CEN level the iCSR issue is included into the agenda of the CEN working group CEN/BT/AP F, dealin also with the Commission Communication Com (2008) 133 “Towards an Increased Contribution From Standardisation to Innovation In Europe”.

Acknowledgements

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Appendices

Appendix I: Example of the survey results

(NOTE: The contents of the questionnaire was the sole responsibility of the students!)

Corporate Social Responsibility & Company Security

Objectives of the Survey

- **What is corporate social responsibility?**
 - The continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development whilst taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on customers, employees, shareholders, communities and the environment, in all aspects of their operations.
- **What is company security?**
 - Precautions taken against any risks that are capable of upsetting on the workings of the company.

Therefore, ...

- create awareness for the issue on hand
- find out how will people react when they are faced with these situations

(sample questions)

4. *

To ensure that companies act socially responsible and do not close an eye on human rights in the name of internal company security:

Do you think by forming a labour union which has a set of legislations to govern the hiring process will benefit candidates who are qualified but previously convicted or prejudiced against due to their ethnicity / gender / marital status/ etc.?

Yes

No

5. *

A strong labour union has laid down legislations which forbid companies, without any valid justifications, to reject job applications of qualified candidates who are previously convicted.

Do you think such a union will:

increase companies' risks of internal security attacks?

have no impact at all on companies' risks of internal security attacks?

9. *

If you are part of the recruitment committee, rate in importance which are the criteria you will look out for in potential candidates applying for a managerial position in your company:

(1 is most important and 5 is least important)

	1	2	3	4	5
Criminal records	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ethnicity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marital status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nationality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sexual orientation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical disabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(sample results)

If you are part of the recruitment committee, rate in importance which are the criteria you will look out for in potential candidates applying for a managerial position in your company:

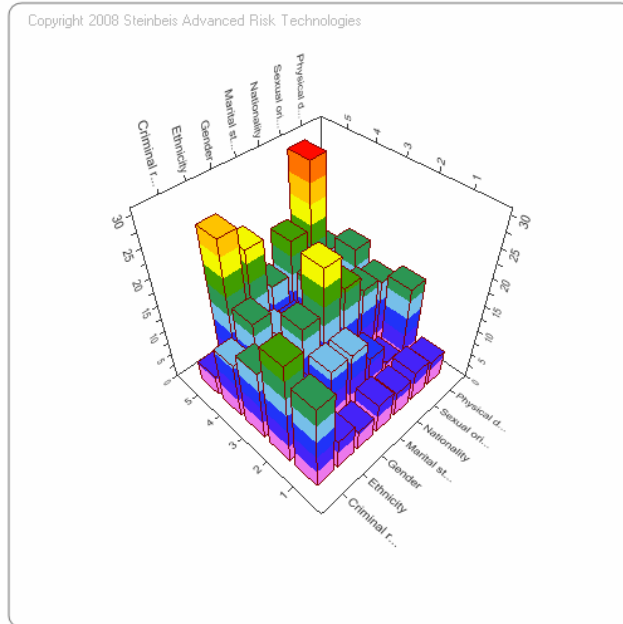
(1 is most important and 5 is least important)

*

Total answers for this question 66 of 66 (100%)

Results

	1	2	3	4	5
Criminal records	17	20	14	11	4
Ethnicity	6	9	8	16	27
Gender	4	12	16	11	23
Marital status	6	12	24	10	14
Nationality	5	8	18	15	20
Sexual orientation	6	4	15	10	31
Physical disabilities	5	16	14	17	14



In your opinion, do you think being a European Union citizen is an advantage when applying for a job?

*

Total answers for this question 66 of 66 (100%)

Yes: 48 (73%)

No: 18 (27%)

You are most welcomed to explain your response.:

- If the job is in Europe, yes because you don't need an employment permit and there are less formalities, so it's less work for the company to hire you than a non-European.
 - I have lost at least 3 good job opportunities in my life due to having a "wrong passport"...
- Assumption for the answer: You only for the job in the EU!

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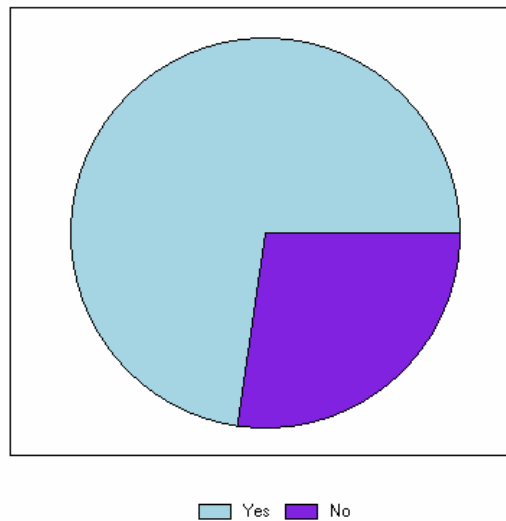


Table 1

Main EU agencies, groups and bodies dealing with emerging risks

Risk Assm. Body	Area of Competence
EFSA	Food and feed safety, Animal health and welfare, Plant health
ECHA	Registration, evaluation of chemicals (REACH)
ECDC	Communicable disease, surveillance, preparedness and response
EEA	Air, water, soils pollution, climate change, natural resources and bio-diversity
SCENIHR	Emerging or newly identified health risks
SCHER	Risks related to toxicity and eco-toxicity of chemical, bio-chemical and biological compounds
SCCP	Health risks of non-food consumer products
SCOEL	Occupational exposure to chemicals
EU-OSHA	European Agency for Safety and Health

NOTE: EU activities are dealt with by the corresponding EU Risk Assessment Bodies like SCENIHR, SCHER, SCOEL, etc., see

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihhr/scenihhr_cons_01_en.htm and (e.g.)
http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/committees_en.htm

Table 2

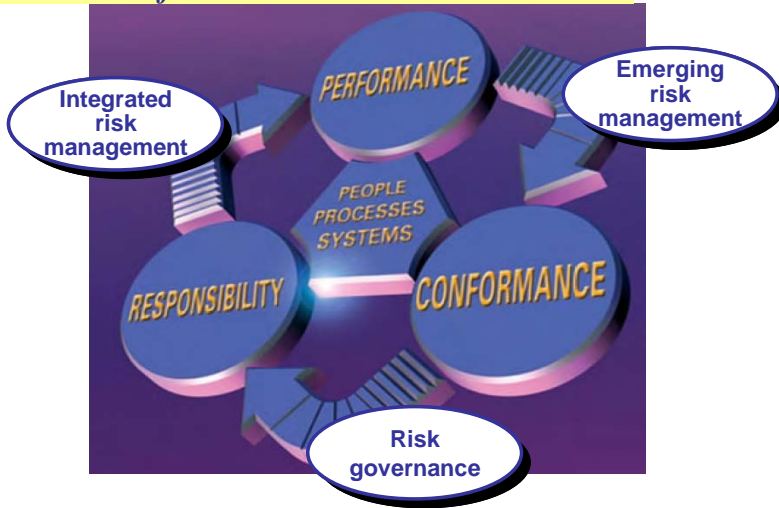
Examples of the topics tackled in the surveys in the period 2006-2008

Year	Survey	Nr. of participants
2006	iCSR in ENERGY SECTOR	11
2006	iCSR in GENERAL INDUSTRY SECTOR	26
2006	iCSR in PUBLIC SECTOR	24
2006	iCSR in FOOD INDUSTRY SECTOR	8
2006	iCSR and the HSE (health, safety, environment) issues	12
2007	iCSR & Energy Security Supply	49
2007	iCSR CSR & Automobile	69
2007	iCSR & Working Environment / Language at working place	48
2008	iCSR & Company Security	66
2008	iCSR & Outsourcing	27
2008	Corporate Social Responsibility & use of nanotechnology	61
2008	Corporate Social Responsibility & climate change and environmental protection	54

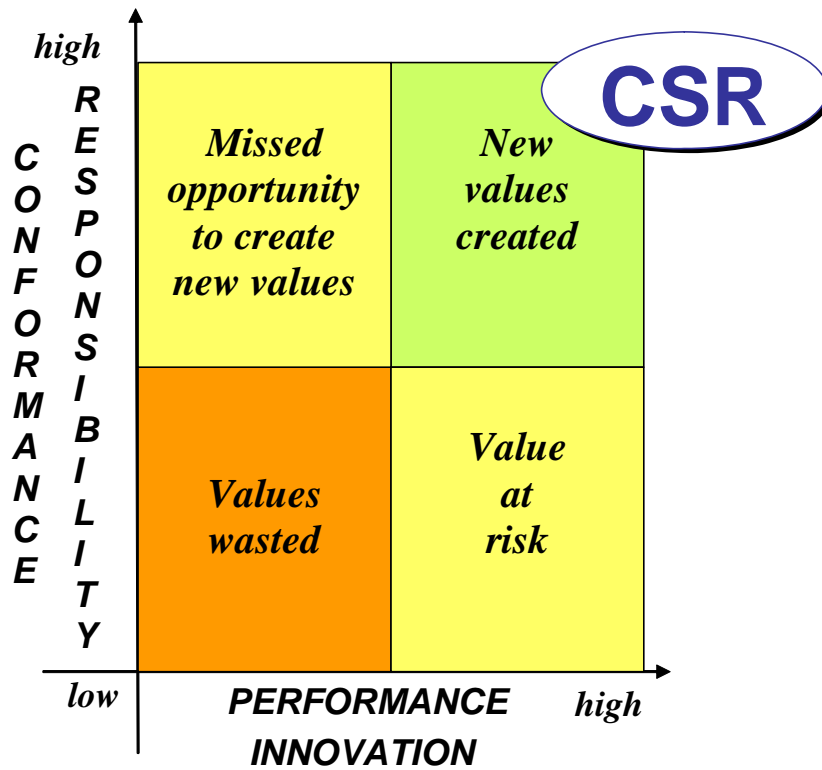
Figure Captions

1. *Combing different aspects of CSR into an overall iCSR framework (adapted from Fahy, M., J. Roche, A. Weiner, 2005)*
2. *iCSR and innovation*
3. *From data to knowledge in the iCSR surveys – use of a data mining tool*

The overall CSR framework ...

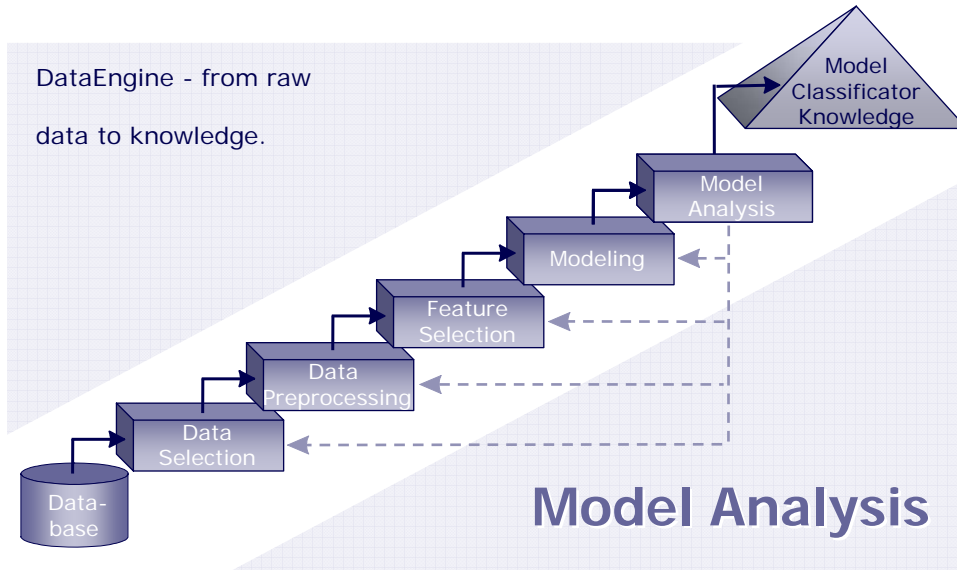


1



2

Data Knowledge



1

2