



PhD Incubator Summary – ‘Top 6’ Research Areas for the Decade ‘A call from the next generation’

The incubator session was undertaken to identify, discuss and rank priority areas for future Corporate Responsibility (CR) research. As well as providing a good ‘ice-breaking’ activity to start to the conference, it was felt that the session would help facilitate the sharing of ideas and potentially highlight areas where the PhD participants could collaborate.

The incubator session also allowed participants the chance leave their often highly focused niche areas of research and consider and discuss the wider issues and themes within the discipline of CR; such an opportunity was seen as especially pertinent given the diverse and wide ranging nature of CR research. The outcomes of the session were also hoped to be seen as a call from the next generation of CR researchers to wider CR community.

Method

In order to achieve these aims a technique was required that allowed a group of individuals with different backgrounds and research interests to collaborate and agree on a top 5 research areas, within a limited time frame.

An adapted ‘Nominal Group Technique’ was utilised as it offered an opportunity to allow the 29 attendees to collectively identify and select research areas. Similar techniques had precedence for use in academic topic identification and discussion (ref).

The technique involved several stages, outlined below:

Task One – Idea and Topic Generation:

Individuals were asked write down their own ideas for ‘priority areas for future CR research’. The participants were allowed 5 minutes to complete this task.

Task Two – Sharing Ideas:

The participants were separated into 8 groups, and asked to share the ideas that they had written down. If new ideas were thought of during this stage, participants were encouraged to note and discuss these also. Each groups was asked to collectively decide on a their own ‘Top 3’ priority areas for research.

Task Three – Presentation to Workshop and Short listing:

Each group was then given the opportunity to present their 3 priority research areas and the reasons for choosing them to the wider workshop.

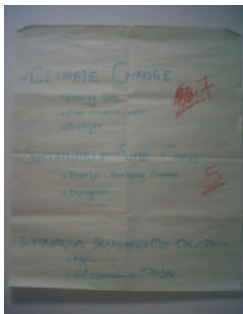
Corporate Responsibility Research Conference 2011



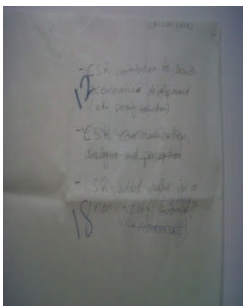
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Topics Identified Through Task 3 & Short-listing (1)

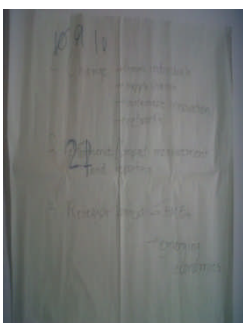
A discussion involving the 8 groups was held in order to aid the ranking process and to eliminate any cross-over or duplication from the outcomes of task 3; these topics are marked **X**. Once completed, all participants were given 5 votes to allocate to the topics they thought were most important, creating a shortlist from which the ranking process could be conducted.



Topic	Votes
Climate Change (Energy use, other resources e.g. water, strategies)	7
Sustainable Supply Chains (Poverty – developing countries, employment)	5
International Frameworks of Regulations (MNE's, Self regulation vs. statutory)	X



CSR's Contribution to Socio-economic Development (aka Poverty Reduction)	12
CSR, Communication, Dialogue and Perception	X
CSR – added value in a non-growing world (i.e. economy)	18



Change (individuals, supply chains, sustainable innovation, networks)	10
Performance/impact Measurement and Reporting	21
Research Contexts (SMEs, Emerging Economies)	X

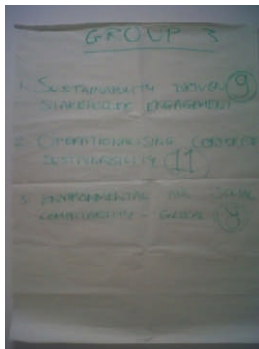
Organised by: Business & Organisations for Sustainable Solitaries Group (BOSS)

Twitter #crrc

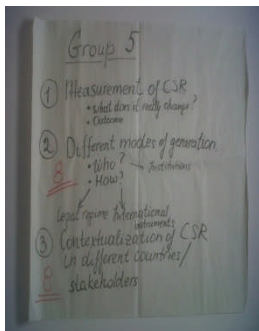




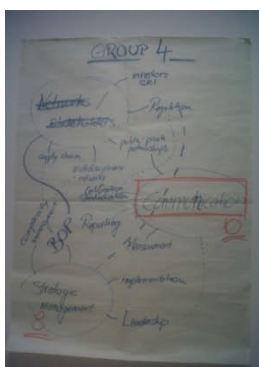
Topics Identified Through Task 3 & Short-listing (2)



Measurement of CSR (What does it change?, Outcomes)	X
Different Modes of Generation (Institutions, Legal Regime, International Instruments)	8
Contextualisation of CSR in different Countries/Stakeholders	8



Sustainability Driven Stakeholder Engagement	9
Operationalising Corporate Sustainability	11
Environmental and Social Compatibility – Global	8



Networks & Stakeholders (supply chain, regulation, public/private partnerships)	X
Communication (Measurement, Reporting, Certification/Standardisation)	10
Strategic Management (Complexity management, leadership, implementation)	8



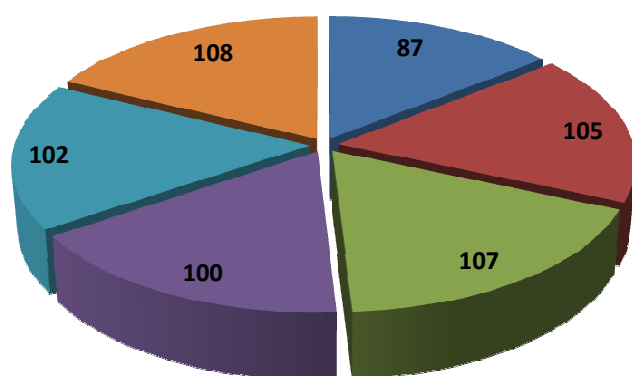


Task 4 – Ranking

The short listing exercise produced 6 topics or themes that were then to be ranked by the participants. The results from the ranking exercise were then collated, with those topics or themes with the lowest scores ranked the highest (see table).

Results

Topic/Theme Ranking Results	Score
Contribution to socioeconomic development and poverty reduction	87
Sustainability driven stakeholder engagement	105
CSR added value in non growing economy	107
Change at multiple scales and contexts	100
Measurement and reporting	102
Operationalising corporate sustainability	108



- Contribution to socioeconomic development and poverty reduction
- Sustainability driven stakeholder engagement
- CSR added value in non growing economy
- Change at multiple scales and contexts
- Measurement and reporting
- Operationalising corporate sustainability





Conclusions

Participant feedback:

- The participants noted that it was an enjoyable and worthwhile task.
- It was noted however that the short listing process may have been flawed, as participants felt that they would have preferred to have been issued with 'stickers' and been able to allocate their 5 votes this way. Some felt that they 'ran out' of vote due to the ordered nature of the short list voting process.
- Many participants felt that more time to debate and further opportunities to argue for or against specific topics would have allowed the topics more opportunity to develop, making the results more robust.
- There were also feelings that the voting and ranking aspects of the exercise were unnecessary and that the real strengths of the session and approach was the idea generation and the discussing of topics. A further focus on developing the linkages and connections between various topics was also felt to be an area that could have been expanded, allowing for additional collaborative possibilities to have been identified.

Our thoughts:

- Although the 8 groups came up with a diverse and myriad set of themes and topics, we were surprised by the degree of commonality in the ideas and issues raised.
- The topics generated also seemed to fit into two categories – those concerned with specific tangible problems or issues, i.e. climate change, versus those that were concerned with approach's to CR and ways to solve issues, i.e. stakeholder engagement, demonstrating the different approaches available for tackling CR issues.
- The way the topics overlapped and the connections between them meant it would have been interesting to have spent more time discussing the implications and research possibilities resulting.

Further comments and feedback welcome. The CRR Conference PhD Workshop Team:
Claire Bastin (c.bastin@leeds.ac.uk), Eirini Ioannou (eeei@leeds.ac.uk), Kendra
Wasiluk (eeklw@leeds.ac.uk), & Thomas Long (eeetbl@leeds.ac.uk).

