Teacher's manual for the integration of SD in engineers curricula

K. **Ceulemans**, M. **De Prins**
Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel, Centre for Corporate Sustainability,
Stormstraat 2, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
kim.ceulemans@hubrussel.be

Abstract

This paper presents some of the efforts that have been made regarding the integration of SD in curricula at the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel. The project took place between July 2006 and December 2007 with funding from the European Social Fund. Based on the experiences of the institution with the integration of SD, and the work of a project team, a teacher's manual was created for the integration of SD in curricula.

In 2005, SD became one of the strategic options of the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel. The translation of this vision into practice challenged the entire staff of the institution. SD integration in universities typically encompasses changes on different levels, namely campus operations, curriculum, research and outreach[1]. The integration of SD in curricula was on of the most difficult barriers to overcome. In order to tackle this problem, a project team with members of the academic world, an employers organisation and an adult training centre was set up, following Lozano's recommendations[2]. The manual focuses on SD integration in bachelor's and master's programs of commercial engineering. The premise was that future managers who are educated in the institution, will be able to make a difference by integrating sustainable business methods into their company's activities.

The teacher's manual consists of different chapters, among which a compilation of teacher's materials in reference to corporate social responsibility (CSR), as a translation of SD for future managers. Specific routines, methods and exercises were created in order for them to gain inspiration on the practical integration of CSR in curricula. Besides the actual integration of CSR in curricula, the process of integration itself turned out to be very useful[3]. It helps to eradicate bottlenecks and creates some dynamism into the difficult process of education for sustainable development (ESD). The objective of the project was to create a long-term multiplier effect throughout the organisation, e.g. by extending the project to other program's curricula. The project's outcome can feed the discussion on a general method to integrate SD into different institutions of higher education.

1. Introduction

The integration of sustainable development in Higher Education has often been experienced as a difficult task, among others due to the fact that the concept of sustainable development is vague, highly complex and therefore difficult to understand[4]. Besides the understanding of the concepts Sustainable Development (SD), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the methods on how to achieve an integration of SD and CSR in education are often unclear to education staff members[5]. As was stated by the organizing committee of the forthcoming 'Engineering Education for Sustainable Development Conference 2008' (EESD 08) in Graz, the time has come to '*lay the groundwork for actual implementation and integration of this principle [SD] into the day to day practice of the education of engineers'*[6].

At the beginning of the academic year 2005-2006, the management of the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel put Sustainable Development on the agenda of the institution. A vision on

how the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel could contribute to SD was announced, and a set of commitments on both strategic and operational levels were made. SD integration was established as a strategic management option in the institution, and in accordance with this option, a long term planning with a number of operational objectives was established. As the entire staff of the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel was challenged by these objectives, many initiatives were undertaken on the different fields of SD integration, i.e. campus operations, curriculum, research and outreach[1]. With these levels of SD integration as a framework, some examples of (ongoing) initiatives of the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel are presented.

First of all, in May 2005 the Centre for Corporate Sustainability was established. The **research** centre focuses on fundamental and applied research on (issues of) SD and CSR. Examples of ongoing research are the relationships between CSR and long-living companies, the use and usability of CSR management systems and the ecoscore of buildings. As SD became a strategic option, one of the researchers was assigned as sustainability coordinator for the institution. One of the coordinator's tasks was to assess the performance of the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel on SD and to start up proactive and remedial projects. For the assessment, the AISHE-method was used. The results of the audit are presented in Appendix 1. An example of one of the remedial projects undertaken in the institution is 'HET IVOOR', the project presented in this paper on the integration of CSR in commercial engineers' curricula. From academic year 2008 - 2009 on, a team of 'faculty SD representatives' together with a half-time SD coordinator, will deploy the SD policy of the university. Secondly, the **outreach** actions on SD of the institution are mainly performed in project environments. The institute (co)finances projects on, amongst others, mentorship and tutoring of minority groups, alternative learning routes and an educational game on CSR. The integration of SD into **campus operations** was the easiest to implement. As the institution earlier chose to employ lower-skilled workers and refugees for housekeeping tasks, the management decided, in line with the outcomes of the AISHE-audit, to focus on campus greening and the implementation of an environmental management system (EMS). Student projects on the initial environmental audit and the integration of the EMS with the quality management system were initiated. In this way, a double objective was achieved. On the one hand, campus greening was achieved, but it also incurred an intensification of the integration in curricula. Finally, for the adaptation of the **curriculum,** the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel preferred an incremental approach towards SD integration. In 2005 - 2006, the curriculum of the Master of Environment, Health and Safety Management was tailored. In the new program, which initiated in 2006 - 2007, SD was put on the forefront in several courses, and a master course on SD was introduced. Competencies for SD and CSR were also introduced in the master program. The experience with the revision of this program was transposed to the other programs of the institution. In 2007 - 2008, the SD competencies were introduced in master as well as professional and academic bachelor programs. In this way, ESD was embedded in the other programs, including the commercial engineers' curriculum. The project 'HET IVOOR' was well suited for the commercial engineers' curriculum, since less spontaneous action from the teaching staff was undertaken. As a surplus, the variation of taught courses made it a useful project environment, because the developed teacher's manual is also a valuable tool for other programs within the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel and outside**.** In the meanwhile, the Master program of Commercial Engineering is also restructured and will be implemented in the academic year 2008 - 2009. A thematic cluster on 'globalization and sustainability' is added to the program.

From the above we can conclude that at the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel, many initiatives are being undertaken to facilitate the integration of SD in the institution. Included in these initiatives are (1) *the engagement of top-level support*, (2) *the provision of an institutional framework to ensure continuity of SD efforts* and (3) *the use of an SD reporting tool (AISHE)*. According to Lozano[2], these are three of the five steps to take to incorporate SD into the university system. From 2006 on, the other two steps of SD incorporation of Lozano[2] were taken into consideration to integrate SD into the institution. These last steps are (4) *the provision of information and skills to all stakeholders, with a special focus on educating the educators*, and (5) *detecting, engaging and empowering individuals on the SD subject, in order to create a multiplier effect throughout the organization*[2].

The project 'HET IVOOR' was very valuable for the implementation of the last two steps of this approach. This was due to the fact that a teacher's manual on CSR integration was created, or in other words, focus was set on an intermediary target group of lecturers and teachers ('*educating the educators*'), in order to reach a large final target group of students who are sensitized towards the SD concept. Moreover, the project is valuable because of its multiplier effect: the variation of taught courses in the commercial engineers' curriculum implies that the manual can be slightly adapted and applied in other programs. In the following section, the project 'HET IVOOR' is presented, in order to inform the reader on the project approach, the teacher's manual and the learning experience related to the project.

2. Project on CSR Integration in Curricula

Research on the implementation of CSR in business environments pointed out that companies are often willing to engage in greening their business operations, while less action is taken on the optimization of social aspects of their business[7]. Moreover, SD issues integrated in mission statements are hardly ever translated into operational targets[7]. These basic assumptions moved the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel to engage in a 18 month project, called 'HET IVOOR', on the integration of CSR in student's curricula. The underlying thought was that commercial engineering students are future managers who, in the distant future, will able to create different business environments by integrating sustainability into their operations and long-term corporate goals. Within this project, the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel chose not to focus directly on students, but on an intermediate target group, i.e. the education staff of the institution (professors and lecturers).

The idea to focus SD integration efforts on teaching staff is not completely new. It has been practiced before in different institutions[1,2,3] and attention has been drawn to this after initiation of the project as well. For example, Mohamedbhai[8] indicated in 'Contribution of Higher Education to the UN Millennium Development Goals' that *'higher education institutions need to train teachers who are sensitized for promoting sustainable development in schools, and develop school curricula which incorporate sustainable development'*[8]*.* In this article, the author refers directly to the training of *key professionals*, e.g. engineers or economists, in relevant aspects of SD. For the project, the involvement of professors and lecturers was mainly effectuated to ensure a long-lasting continuation of SD integration in curricula. SD and CSR are concepts that can retain attention when professors and lecturers are truly involved and interested in it. When focusing directly on students, the problem is that after four to five years, they are no longer present in the institution. Moreover, there is a need for decent teacher's education on SD and CSR, viewing the fact that many lecturers are not familiar with these concepts and with related issues in their field of study[3].

For 'HET IVOOR', the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel decided to focus on SD integration in the commercial engineering curriculum. As commercial engineering is situated on the intersection between economics and engineering, the students are among the key professionals[8] on which focus should be set for SD integration. In the introduction, it was stated that commercial engineers' curricula also provide benefits for subsequent integration of SD in other student programs, due to the variation of taught courses in the curriculum. This could initiate the desired multiplier effect, reducing the time of SD adoption in the institution[2]. In order not to restrain the project to Higher Education and for benefits of wide dissemination, a collaboration with an employers organization and an adult training centre was set up. This broadened the target group to entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs (for Syntra West, an adult education centre), in addition to the target group of Higher Education students, aimed at by the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel. The third partner, VOKA KVK Oost-Vlaanderen, an employers organization, was involved in the project to extend dissemination of the project results, primarily its role was to make sure the manual consisted of enough practical applications for entrepreneurs. This was required, viewing the fact that focus was set on the education of future managers.

2.1 Project Approach

In order to create a long-lasting continuation of SD integration in curricula, the project team focused on an intermediary target group of professors, lecturers, teachers and instructors to reach students or future entrepreneurs. A teacher's manual on CSR integration in courses of both Higher Education and adult training was created for this target group, in order to inform and educate them on the basic concepts of SD and CSR, and to provide them with practical guidance on how to integrate these concepts into the curriculum. However, working with a target group of lecturers and teachers was not an easy option to execute, because many teachers are not familiar with the concepts of SD and CSR. Moreover, most of them are unaware of the meaning of SD to specific disciplines[3]. It was essential to firstly address this problem, because, before making curricular adaptations, the involved professors and teachers should be familiar with the concepts of SD and CSR and their related principles[1]. Although Lidgren et al.[1] state that '*when this is done, they [teachers] can start to examine their curricula for existing contributions to SD*', the project team decided to spend more time on revealing the relationships between CSR and different disciplines.

Besides the problem of lack of knowledge, another problem was the fact that not all teachers see the benefits of SD and CSR integration, and therefore some of them are not willing to cooperate with the adaptation of their courses. In order to achieve teachers' cooperation on CSR integration and to reveal the major linkages between CSR and different disciplines, the Individual Interaction Method (IIM) of Peet et al.[3] was slightly adapted and implemented in the project. Peet et al.[3] indicate that for SD integration in curricula: '*an individual consultant-like approach is most promising, as it does not conflict with academic culture, keeps the lecturer in charge of his or her own courses and acknowledges the specifics of each subject'.* Therefore, individual conversations with teachers were set up, in order to assess their knowledge on the SD and CSR concepts, to – if necessary – inform them on both subjects, and to jointly search for specific linkages between CSR and their field of study. The aim of the conversation was to gain cooperation on the project, in order to reveal possible linkages with CSR that are already present in the course, and to examine new possibilities for CSR integration in specific courses. Consequently, in collaboration with the project team, this resulted into the formulation of a text, pointing out the linkages of the discipline with CSR. To this text, a table was added, in which a number of specific CSR concepts were drawn up. The table is added as appendix tot this paper (Appendix 2). For each of these concepts, the teachers were asked to mark the linkages of the concept and their discipline with an 'X', and add a sentence or notion to further explain the relationship. The concepts marked in the table are analogous to the ones in the text, yet they provide a quick visual image of the revealed linkages. The process itself of revealing links between CSR and disciplines was very useful for the project team and teachers, because it creates a valuable dialogue on SD integration in curricula. As the process also requires a strong induction in the theme of SD and CSR, both the project team and the involved teachers broaden their knowledge and visions on the complex concepts of SD and CSR.

After jointly creating texts and tables, the teachers were asked to cooperate on finding new didactic materials for CSR integration in their courses. As a result, either completely new CSR related routines, methods and exercises were drawn up, either existing exercises were adapted by adding a component of corporate responsibility. Finally, some teachers who were already in the process of utilizing SD integrated teaching materials, were asked to share their work with interested colleagues and give permission for their work to be added to the teacher's manual as best practices. For the creation of didactic materials, the project team decided not to focus on formal lectures, yet on CSR integration in student-activating teaching methods and exercises. This is due to the fact that SD integration in curricula requires a re-orientation of teaching approaches and methodologies, so that team work, multi- and interdisciplinary collaboration and project-based initiatives can be set up[8]. For this reason an appendix on student-activating methods was added to the manual. A section on competencies for SD and CSR was also included. In this way, the manual - a combination of general and discipline related background information and teaching materials - can be used as a self-contained instruction book. Moreover, teachers can be challenged and inspired by the examples in the manual and create or adapt their own exercises, examples or case studies.

The project approach resulted in a teacher's manual for the use of private study, and by which teachers can gain inspiration on the practical integration of CSR into the courses they teach. The manual is set up in such a way that teachers can deduce those parts and chapters that are of use for them. This is important, because in an institution, one is confronted with teachers with different levels of knowledge on the SD subject. The purpose of the manual is to motivate teachers to apply student-activating teaching methods when integrating SD and CSR into their courses, in order for them to sensitize students on these subjects.

2.2 Presentation of the Teacher's Manual

The teacher's manual is created by the 'HET IVOOR' project team and different professors and teachers from the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel and Syntra West. In Figure 1, the different parts and chapters that are present in the manual are shown. After a short introduction, parts 1 and 2 provide the reader with definitions and additional information on SD and CSR. The first two chapters deal with the definitions of the concepts of SD and CSR, while in chapter 3, the benefits of sustainable entrepreneurship are addressed. This should provide an answer to the fact that many people are unaware of the advantages of CSR and wonder whether companies themselves benefit from a higher degree of corporate responsibility. In part 2, focus is set on SD and CSR in education. Here, the milestones of SD and education are presented, and some examples are given on SD initiatives in Belgium and the Netherlands. The second chapter of part 2 is dedicated to competencies for SD and CSR.

Part 3 addresses the relationship between CSR and different fields of study. For a number of courses in different disciplines, a text and table were set up, in which the major linkages with CSR are indicated. A distinction was made between courses of Higher Education and adult training courses. The final part is a compilation of teaching methods, routines and exercises for the integration of CSR into different disciplines. Specific constructions and exercises for professors and teachers are created in order for them to gain inspiration on the practical integration of the subject into curricula.

Introduction 1. Project with funding from the European Social Fund 2. Acknowledgements
Part 1: Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility 1. What is sustainable development (SD)? 2. What is corporate social responsibility (CSR)? 3. Why sustainable entrepreneurship?
Part 2: Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility in Education 1. SD and CSR in education 2. Competencies for SD and CSR
Part 3: Relationship between CSR and disciplines 1. Introduction 2. Relationship between CSR and Higher Education courses 3. Relationship between CSR and Professional Education courses
Part 4: Integration of CSR: teacher materials 1. Introduction 2. Overview of student-activating teaching methods 3. Teacher materials for CSR in Higher Education 4. Teacher materials for CSR in Professional Education

Figure 1: Parts and Chapters of the Teacher's Manual for the Integration of CSR

3. Discussion and Conclusions

The discussion on how to address SD is lively and ongoing. As Boks and Diehl[9] state, a body of knowledge and experience is beginning to develop on the subject, yet according to the authors, '*this body mainly reports on experiences with teaching separate courses devoted to sustainability topics*'. In general, two tendencies can be distinguished in literature regarding SD integration in curricula: horizontal or vertical integration. In horizontal integration, SD is interwoven within different courses of the curriculum, while vertical integration can be understood as the organization of separate SD courses within the curriculum. Although both options have their own advantages and disadvantages, many authors and institutions (among which Wals[10], Peet et.al.[3], Roorda[11] and UNESCO[12]) are clearly in favor of horizontal integration. They all focus on interdisciplinarity and the necessity of a systematic and holistic approach towards SD. It is however difficult to find a general approach towards SD integration in curricula. An important barrier - addressed by Fien[13] - is the fact that no two institutions are alike, and therefore an individual system should be implemented that is locally relevant and culturally appropriate. Secondly, the complexity of university structures is another major barrier. This implies that systems for SD integration are hard to implement, because universities are highly decentralized and governed by deeply established, unwritten rules (Sharp (2003) in Lidgren[1]).

One of the major learning experiences forthcoming from this project was that SD integration in all dimensions of the institution should evolve in incremental steps[2,14] in order for it to be accepted by all stakeholders, in this case mainly the teaching staff. Radical changes of SD integration often imply a large extent of resistance and unnecessary conflicts[2]. Nevertheless, curricular changes should be effectuated continuously so that continual improvement is made, and the process is not in any way ceased or suspended.[14] As Hjorth and Bagheri[15] indicate in 'Navigating towards sustainable development: A system dynamics approach', one of the problems is that SD is often seen as a project with an 'end-state', in stead of a process of continual improvement. From the start of the project 'HET IVOOR' on, attention was given to the continuation of the project outcomes. Even before the output was produced, arrangements were made to integrate the manual in the documentation for new teachers. Sessions on how to use the manual are scheduled within the training offer of the institution. As the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel believes in competency-based management, the desired competencies for all staff members were defined. In line with SD as a strategic management option, a competency on SD and diversity was added, on which all staff members will be evaluated when the competency-based approach of the institution is fully implemented.

Another issue is the motivation of professors and lecturers of the institution. Certainly concerning non-compulsory tasks like SD integration, it is hard to motivate an entire staff to go into action on the subject. The use of the IIM was a good solution to this problem, because this created a large extent of personal involvement of professors and teachers in the SD integration. Peet et al.[3] are of the opinion that a top-down approach towards SD integration incurs a lot of resistance among teachers. The authors therefore use a bottom-up approach by applying the IIM. Nevertheless, they also indicate the necessity of top management support. The project team of 'HET IVOOR' noticed during the project that the creation of SD competencies by the management of the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel was useful, because it offered extra legitimacy and cooperation from teachers for SD integration in curricula. For teachers, this is also some sort of appreciation for their efforts, viewing the fact that they will be evaluated on the implementation of these issues. Therefore, the project team agrees with Lozano[2] and Molderez[16], who plead for the joint use of both approaches (bottom-up and top-down). A bottom-up approach is very useful, because small initiatives undertaken by the staff itself often have more impact due to their non-compulsory and informal character, while one of the benefits of a top-down approach is the scale to which they can be applied and implemented in a short time span. The difference in motivation within the teaching staff resulted in the fact that the project team had to work on several levels at the same time. While some teachers needed background information on SD and CSR, other teachers already needed support on adapting their teaching materials. Although a difficult exercise for the project team, working at different paces turned out to be necessary to keep all stakeholders motivated for the project. As Peet et al. [3] already indicated, *'all lecturers have to grasp and integrate the concept of SD in their courses […]'*. To assist teachers with this process and to support the bottom-up approach, the table with CSR concepts can be a useful tool. The table turned out to be an easy-to-use approach for teachers to reflect on the linkages between their discipline and CSR. By presenting a variety of issues related to SD and CSR, teachers have a quick understanding of the concepts within their field of study.

It was stated earlier that, besides the creation of the teacher's manual, the process itself of SD and CSR integration was very useful for the project team and teachers, because it creates a valuable dialogue on the subject, and broadens the knowledge on the complex concepts of SD and CSR. Therefore, for the institution, the project was an interesting exercise for SD integration in the commercial engineers program. The learning experiences of the project team also benefit subsequent integration in other programs of the institution. The structure of the institution, being a college rather than a university, certainly helped the project team on the implementation. This was amongst others due to the fact that the institution is rather centralized, and that in the Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel, teachers have less autonomy than in a typical university.

The dissemination and anchoring of the project outcomes was enhanced by the dynamics on ESD that arose in Flanders, thanks to a project funded by the ministers of Environment, Education and Equality, called 'Project DOEN!' (currently 'DHO Vlaanderen'). As a result of the

project HET IVOOR combined with these dynamics, the Hogeschool-Universiteit took another major step on the integration of SD in all its activities.

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Appendix 1: results of the AISHE-audit

To measure the strengths and weaknesses of the sustainability agenda of the institute with a special focus on the curriculum of the Master of Environment, Health and Safety Management, the AISHE 1.5 (Auditing Instrument for Sustainability in Higher Education) was used. The results of this audit are showed in Figure 2.

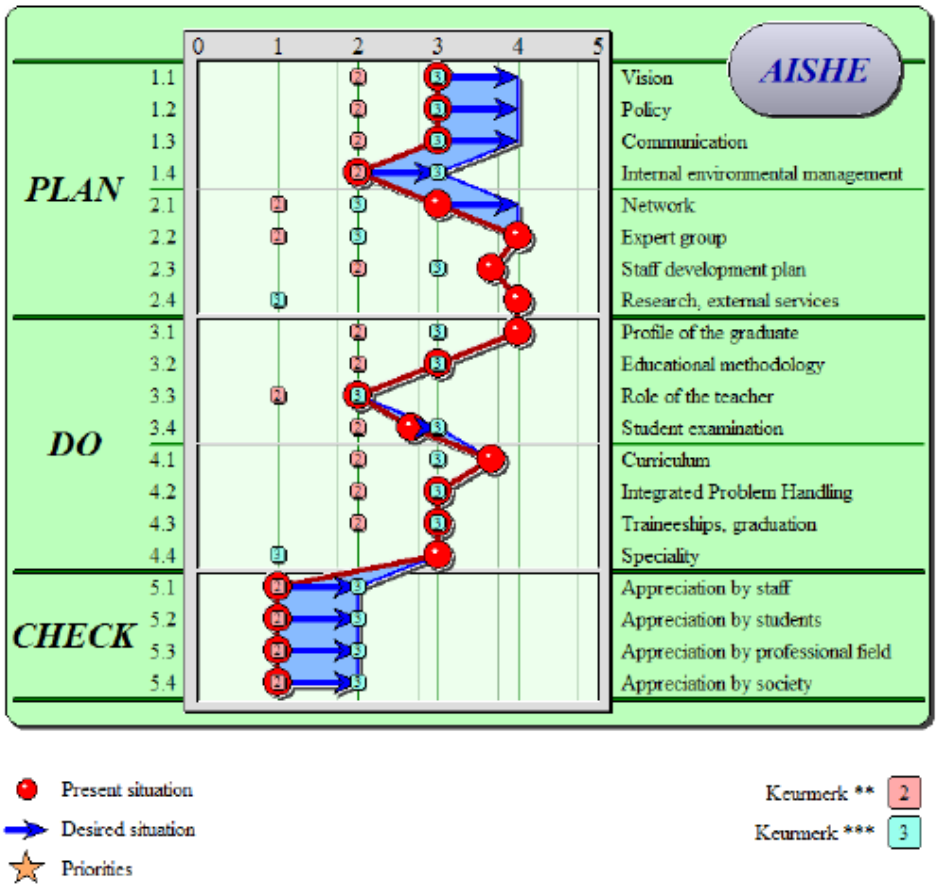

Figure 2: Results of AISHE audit Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel – Master of Environment, Health and Safety Management

Appendix 2: Table to indicate linkages between CSR and the discipline

THEME	RELATION	CLARIFICATION
People		
Internal		
Working conditions		
Provisions for employees		
Safety and security		
Psychosocial aspects of work (stress, mobbing, …)		
Equal right/ diversity		
Training and education		
Career deployment		
External		
Human rights		
Developing countries		
Workers rights (trade unions etc.)		
Child labour		
Planet		
Environmental management		
Involvement of staff with environmental policy		
Environmental responsibility		
Energy usage		
Water usage		
Usage of materials		
Transport and commuter traffic		
Decrease of emissions		
Supply chain management		
Environmental impact of products		
Optimization of processes		
Profit		
Strategy and policy		
Financial policy		
Quality management		
Wages policy		
Employment		
Customer satisfaction		
Product safety and quality		
Service		
Charity		

Stakeholdermanagement			
	Participation		
	Reporting		
	Internal communication and relations		
	Employees		
	Shareholders		
	External communication and relations		
	Suppliers		
	(Sub)contractors		
	Customers		
	Governments		
	Ngo's		
	Outreach		
Corporate ethics			
	Corporate governance		
	Rules of conduct		