Chapter 10
Sustainability in Higher Education: Social Responsibility or Social Reputation?

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ABSTRACT
This chapter critically examines the relationship between HEIs and their communities and questions whether the main motivating factors and drivers behind the increasing importance that sustainability plays in their policy making are social responsibility or social reputation based. Exploratory case studies are undertaken with a number of Higher Education Institutes in respect to the drivers for creation of their Green ICT Policy. Evidence suggests that social reputation is a declining factor on the greening of ICT in the education sector whilst there is an impetus towards financial savings and improving efficiency.

INTRODUCTION
Higher Education Institutes are increasingly using their own sustainability credentials as marketing tools to entice potential students to apply to study on their campuses. As significant protagonists in the struggle against global warming they have a major role in nurturing and educating their communities to deal with the challenges posed by sustainability.

In the United Kingdom, the Government has set a target of reducing carbon emissions by 80% by the year 2050. On an international scale, the only commitment to reducing emissions is the Kyoto Protocol which ‘sets binding targets for 37 industrialised countries and the European Community for reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions’ (Kyotoprotocol.com). The global recession has also vastly affected the funds available for implementing Green IT projects. It is estimated...
that the recession led to a 15% reduction in funds available in Europe alone (Gartner 2009).

In this chapter we critically examine the relationship between HEIs and their communities and questions whether the main motivating factors and drivers behind the increasing importance that sustainability plays in their policy making are socially responsibility or social reputation based.

**BACKGROUND**

Sustainability presents the human race with an unparalleled challenge which it needs to respond to in order to maintain its existence. It was first conceptualized by the eminent economist Schumacher (1972) in his essays “Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered” but came to prominence after the publication of the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) which stated that we must “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”.

**Sustainable Development**

Borne out of the Brundtland Report was the subject matter of ‘sustainable development’. The roots of sustainable development lie in the socio-environmental consequences of unsustainable development paths that have dominated since the industrial revolution (Strong et al, 1997). Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without the need of future generations to meet their own needs (Charter, 1992).

**Corporate Sustainability**

When transporting this idea to the business level, corporate sustainability can be defined as meeting the needs of a firm’s direct and indirect stakeholders (such as shareholders, employees, clients, pressure groups, communities etc.) without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders as well (Dyllick et al, 2002).

Within corporate sustainability, the three dimensions of triple bottom line theory (Elkington, 1997) are inter related and in the long run firms must maintain and grow their economic, social and environmental capital bases simultaneously (Dyllick et al, 2002 - see Figure 1).

- Economically sustainable companies guarantee at any time cash flow sufficient to ensure liquidity while producing a persistent above average return to their shareholders.
- Ecologically sustainable companies use only natural resources that are consumed at a rate below the natural reproduction, or at a rate below the development of substitutes. They do not cause emissions that accumulate in the environment at a rate beyond the capacity of the natural system to absorb and assimilate these emissions. Finally they do not engage in activity that degrades eco-system services.
- Socially sustainable companies add value to the communities within which they operate by increasing the human capital of individual partners as well as furthering the societal capital of these communities.

*Figure 1. Three dimensions of sustainability (Source: Dyllick et al, 2002)*

Economic Sustainability

Environmental Sustainability

Social Sustainability
Flash Flood Hazard Assessment in Small Agricultural Basins Coupling GIS-Data and Cellular Automata Modelling: First Experimentations in Upper-Normandy (France)