Aalto University School of Business Progress on the PRME

This is a progress report of Aalto University School of Economics describing the developments mainly after our previous report in 2012.

The activities reported as we expressed our commitment to PRME the first time in 2008 and our previous reports are still valid. Research on Corporate Responsibility is active especially at the Department of Management Studies, but has increased in many other departments as well. Corporate Responsibility is still an increasingly important topic both in the Bachelor’s and Master’s Programs and in the MBA programs.

This year we report again a few concrete activities and achievements.

1 Principle: Purpose

In order to systematically develop the capabilities of business students in the area of sustainability Aalto University School of Business has integrated these issues in the learning objectives and outcomes of all programmes.

One of the learning objectives of our Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes is: "Ability to address ethics, sustainability, and international context".

The learning outcome is defined in the Bachelor’s programmes in the following way: "By graduation our students will be able to identify and analyze ethical, social, economic, environmental, and international issues in their area of specialisation."

In the Master’s programmes the common learning objective is: "By graduation our students will be able to apply an integrated process for
addressing ethical, social, economic, environmental and international issues in the field of their specialized program."

The school is working on further improvements in the measurement of these learning objectives through rubrics and other tools.

Sustainable Business Club represents the activities of students to enhance understanding and various activities on sustainability in Aalto University School of Business. For information of the activities see: http://aaltosbc.blogspot.fi/

2 Principle: Values integration

We approach sustainability-related education through two lenses at the Aalto University School of Business: on one hand, we train sustainability specialists in our Master’s programs Management and Creative Sustainability. On the other hand, we aim at improving the "sustainability literacy" of all business students, because the lack of knowledge of other managers in companies is one of the major challenges of present day corporate responsibility officers in business.

The overall learning outcomes and curriculum of the Bachelor’s program have been renewed. A new mandatory introductory course on corporate responsibility and business ethics has been introduced for the first year of studies. In addition we have improved the alignment of the first year basic business courses through cooperation and coordination. In the case of corporate responsibility teaching, this means that there is a dialogue between the responsibility-related issues taught in accounting, financing, marketing, business law etc. In most of the basic courses that are taught during the first year, responsibility issues are brought up and discussed whenever appropriate. The specific corporate responsibility course, which is offered in the last period during the first year, can then build on the issues already discussed during other basic courses.

Finally, we have introduced two new 1 credit (ECTS) courses to the first year curriculum, Real Case 1 and Real Case 2. The former took place already during the students’ orientation week before they start studying, and includes an introduction of a case company as well as an introductory session of the different majors offered at the School of Business. The purpose is to give students an understanding of different functions in organizations and help them understand questions related to them in business activities. The latter takes place at the end of the first year. During that course, the students need to integrate the knowledge and skills they have learned during the first year to solve a real business case presented by another case organization. In both these courses, corporate responsibility is included as a subject among others, and students need to address responsibility issues in both cases. (see also Inspirational Guide for the Implementation of PRME. Second Edition: Learning to Go Beyond, Greenleaf, 2013).
3 Principle: Method

Aalto University School of Business continues to have a broad selection of elective courses on sustainability, which have been described in the earlier reports. We use increasingly problem-based learning in our courses, which allow the students to work in various projects attempting to find solutions to the hard challenges of sustainability.

One example of flexible teaching concepts is a Skills seminar organized in our CEMS-programme in connection to a visit of European Commissioner for the Environment, Janez Potočnik, in our school. The students were asked to study a few academic articles and a major EU policy document on Environmental Action Programme for prereading and then prepare questions to the Commissioner. The questions were discussed in a session before the presentation of the Commissioner and the students put forward some of their questions in the real situation.

Another example of new kind of courses is The Aalto Global Impact Challenge course, which has offered the opportunity to students to get involved in the operations of Aalto University under its mission of community building and positive soci(et)al impact. The course, during which the students get hands-on involvement in the project management, design and other related operations of Aalto Global Impact, will be redesigned for the next academic year. (for more of AGI, see principle 6).

4 Principle: Research

The research on responsible business continues to be active at the department of Management Studies. For more information see https://wiki.aalto.fi/display/CESRR/About+CESR. The projects cover various aspects of Business and sustainable development, including e.g. sustainable lifestyles, BOP-business (https://wiki.aalto.fi/display/BOP/Inclusive+business+models+in+low-income+contexts), e.g. frugal innovations for developing markets, energy-related innovations.

At the Department of accounting Assistant Professor Hanna Silvola leads research on financial & non-financial measures, sustainability reporting and management accounting and control. The increased interest of students has resulted 6 Master’s Theses in 2014.

5 Principle: Partnership

The relations of Aalto University School of Business and the personal relations of its faculty towards Finnish and international business remain active. This is continuously reflected by good access to research data, live cases in teaching and numerous visitors on our courses.
6 Principle: Dialogue

Aalto University has published its second sustainability report following the ISCN-GULF Sustainable Campus Charter of the year 2013 in the spring 2014 (http://www.international-sustainable-campus-network.org/aalto-university/view-category.html).

Aalto University is a member of FiBS CR network in Finland (http://www.fibser.fi/fi/fibs25-en). This allows our staff and students to network with Finnish business. Aalto University specialists are used by FiBS as presenters.

Aalto Global Impact has been created to support Aalto University’s societal mission for making the world a better place. It has been recognised that within Aalto community, there already exists a number of people, projects and practices, working both internationally and in Finland with complex societal challenges. The aim of AGI is to bring together the already existing partners working on societal issues and further support them to develop their activities. See http://www.aaltoglobalimpact.org/html/index.html.
Renewal of Commitment to the PRME

Helsinki School of Business expressed its commitment to the Principles for Responsible Management Education May 22, 2008. Now as part of Aalto University, we are still very firmly committed to those principles and in my opinion can show a very good progress in several areas.

Especially I'd like to mention objective of integrating responsibility into our curricula in a broad way. We have started that process, but there is still work to do before responsible management really is an integral part of all disciplines at our school.

We also want to continuously develop our own practices in a way that helps to support the cause of responsibility in business.

Helsinki 5th May, 2014

[Signature]

Ingmar Björkman
Dean
Aalto University, School of Business