Introduction

Since the University of Dubai (UD) became signatory to PRME in 2008, we have implemented curriculum changes in two stages: firstly by introducing a core course, Business and Society; and secondly by introducing case studies. Discussions with UD students have indicated that their awareness of the Principles of PRME and responsibility towards society and the environment have increased over the past five years.

- UD’s coordinator of PRME activities has co-authored two peer-reviewed journal articles and one international conference paper on PRME.
- Our partnership with the employee volunteer organisation ENGAGE has initiated a good number of guest lectures on topics such as CSR, ethics and sustainability.
- Our relationship with Dubai Municipality has assured the participation of UD students, staff, and faculty members in the clean-up campaign and tree planting events every year. These talks have had a great impact on UD students.
- The ongoing dialogue with the industry in the country has led to joint philanthropic activity and discussions.
- Field trips and group projects with organisations active in sustainability also help to extend the dialogue to the students’ level.

Challenges

In the area of the curriculum, the major changes were implemented at the undergraduate level, and they were well received by faculty members. However, at the faculty level there was resistance to implement changes in terms of case studies and chapter concerning ethics. Faculty members of certain disciplines were not convinced of the importance of introducing new material or covering the materials concerning ethics, sustainability, and CSR. Their argument was that these topics were not relevant to the subjects that they teach.

Faculty doing research in the area also faced challenges. Per university policy, research conducted in the same area of a faculty member’s PhD receives encouragement and is considered under promotion requirements. This challenge was addressed to certain extent by encouraging researchers to link their research on CSR and sustainability with their academic disciplines. By doing so, an article on green consumption gets credit as a marketing publication as well as sustainability related research.

In the area of partnership, UD’s activities have involved inviting guest lecturers to BBA and MBA programmes and assigning groups of students to do their projects on organisations active in sustainability. The major challenge in this area was to obtain the guests with the right qualifications and expertise in the area of sustainability, corporate ethics, governance, CSR, and environmental issues. Since this is an ongoing process for the core course, Business and Society, it has been a challenging task
to source volunteers. Getting more students to participate in the clean-up campaigns and tree planting events is the main challenge in our partnership with Dubai Municipality.

Coordinating the top management at both the participating organisation and UD was a major challenge in the area of dialogue. A good amount of time and effort was needed to coordinate activities involving both organisations. An example is the activity in which UD initiated the donation of used books to the Ethiopian Civil Service University (ECSU) library. While TNT Express volunteered to take care of the transportation of the books from Dubai to Ethiopia, the customs department at Addis Ababa Airport would not allow TNT to clear the material, which had to be done by ECSU officials. Communication and coordination challenges were the main concern in such situations. A further example, monitoring student projects became challenging when some groups avoided company visits and obtained the required information from websites. Because majority of the students are employed, organising field trips during the day also is a challenging task.

**Actions taken**

Support from the top management was available in terms of implementing curriculum changes at faculty level. The team assigned for implementation of PRME communicated the mode of implementation and details in forums, such as faculty council meetings and teaching forums. One question relating to faculty teaching of sustainability and CSR was included in student evaluation surveys, the results of which are linked to faculty performance evaluation for promotions.

In order to overcome challenges relating to research, three articles co-authored by the UD faculty were presented at the faculty research forum. The presentations were followed by Q&A sessions, during which members provided their feedback. A few research works are underway among UD students to measure their awareness of green consumption, carbon footprint, and CSR. More emphasis on research by introducing benchmarks is resulting in more publications.

Challenges in partnership were well managed with governmental, private, and volunteer organisations. For this purpose, we were in regular contact with government organisations, such as Dubai Economic Department (DED), Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), and employee volunteer organisations. A faculty-for-a-day event, when guest speakers from industry give lectures, is made a regular feature all through the semester instead of one week per semester. Cooperation from other faculty members and staff was solicited to overcome the communication and coordination challenges faced in the dialogue area. Help from the student services department was requested to overcome long run logistical problems. Group projects of students were monitored closely, with evidence of company visits made mandatory to ensure genuine work.

**Results**

Students, faculty, and staff of UD are increasingly aware of PRME-related activities and outcomes since these curriculum changes have been implemented. Every business graduate from UD obtains a thorough understating of their responsibility towards the organisations they may work for as well as the environment and society where they live. Further, student evaluations related to faculty teaching on sustainability have encouraged faculty members to focus more on the topic while they teach.
University of Dubai
The Impact of Implementing PRME

In the field of research, UD faculties have co-authored two peer-reviewed articles and one international conference paper. Publications and presentations in the faculty research forums at UD and the international conferences have created more interest among UD faculty members. As a result, more faculty have initiated research by linking sustainability and CSR to their disciplines. Currently, UD management is providing time release for such publications.

Regarding partnership activities, faculty members interact on a regular basis to contact business councils and forums. Student services also coordinate with faculty members for partnership activities. Synergy out of such cooperation has resulted in faster execution of partnership activities. Cooperation from the management, faculty and staff has also helped to a great extent to overcome challenges in dialogue. The number of students participating in the clean-up campaign and tree planning events has increased gradually. Closer association with ENGAGE, DCCI, and DED has provided a larger pool of employee volunteers as guest speakers. The quality of student group projects conducted at organisations on sustainability has increased in the past five years. Finally, UD will host the [3rd PRME MENA Regional Forum](#) from 9-11 November 2013.

The role of PRME/sustainability principles

- Make business graduates aware of their responsibilities towards society, the environment, and their future employers.
- Encourage academic research in the field of sustainability that will lead to availability of a better pool of knowledge for future generations.
- Create better awareness and involvement in sustainability activities among industry partners.
- Encourage students and faculty to have direct dialogue about sustainability with the society they live in.