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Ethical dimension of responsible environmental education for business

Abstract

My presentation will focus on the knowledge and methods of e-learning for higher responsibility in managerial positions in business and public administration and will describe the strategic decision-making and its ethical impact from the point of view of formal and tacit knowledge. The goal is to use more efficient e-learning tools for reaching sustainable development.

1 Introduction

Why is it important to care for a proper environmental education for people acting in the world of business? Where does environment cross business? How important a role do ethics play in this relationship? Clearly, it is essential to answer these and more questions before we go into particulars within this topic.

My opinion is that it is impossible to separate environment from business. A cooperation of environmental experts and professional businessmen in environmental problems is more than useful – it is inevitable. This cooperation does not exist naturally. It has to be learned and understood. This is the point at which the role of education and knowledge of responsibility become important. To understand all these issues and their connection, we have to go through a number of topics: responsibility, ethics, education and environment.

2 Responsibility

What role does responsibility play in environmental problems in business? It is important to understand the differences between the scopes of the different shades of responsibility that touch our focus of attention. It is the managerial, environmental and social responsibility and it is the notion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that will be dealt with in the following section.

2.1 Environmental Responsibility

Over the past years, environmental responsibility has expanded to involve substantially more than just compliance with all applicable government regulations or even a few initiatives such as recycling or energy efficiency. Many citizens, environmental organizations and leadership companies now define environmental responsibility as involving a comprehensive approach to a company's operations, products and facilities that include assessing business products, processes and services; eliminating waste and emissions; maximizing the efficiency and productivity of all assets and resources, and minimizing practices that might adversely affect the enjoyment of the planet's resources by future generations.

A vast number of companies in a wide range of sectors and geographic regions have found value and competitive advantage from environmental initiatives. Such initiatives fall into several categories, including pollution prevention, energy efficiency, design for the environment, supply-chain management, industrial ecology and sustainable development.

Leadership companies have embraced a variety of these initiatives while integrating environmental responsibility as a core business value at all levels of their operations. [1]

2.2 Ecological and social responsibility

The rule of ecological and social responsibility gains ever greater importance both on the state as well as the international level as it appears in a number of political and legal documents. It is also closely connected with the concept of sustainable development, which is defined as the right of the present generation to meet its need for development without deterring the rights of the future generations to meet their needs. Thereby the essence of sustainable development has been defined as the rule of solidarity between generations. This definition points to the fact that the development of the economy and civilisation of the present generation should not be pursued at the expense of the loss of non-renewable resources or degradation of the environment, but with respect to future generations' rights and opportunities to develop. The rule of environmental and social responsibility should afford through participation and responsibility of the whole society, that means through a process of a political character. Deep ethical belief that man should be a good and caring keeper of such heritage as Earth as well as the importance of ethics in the process of making the right choice as far as nature is concerned has already been pointed out in the World Charter for Nature accepted at the UN General Assembly in 1982. In the Charter it has been written: Every life-form is unique and as a value requires respect from mankind. In result, taking into account the ethical value of life, man should apply moral rules in his relations with living organisms. World Strategy for Nature Preservation has called for a new ethics, which would enable humanity to live in harmony with nature and enrich the existing economic and social systems by adding the environmental aspect. Human culture has to be built on the basis of respect for nature, understanding of our unity with it, as well as understanding that humane actions should be taken in harmony and balance with environment. The signing of the Aarhus Convention (Convention on the access to information and public participation in the decision making process and access to jurisdiction in environmental matters) in 1998 by the majority of the European countries constituted another important step towards the application of the rule. The Aarhus Convention reaches beyond the traditionally seen environmental problem and constitutes one of the first attempts to add issues concerned with the functioning of the so called "open European societies" to the existing rules of international law. [2]

2.3 Corporate social responsibility

"The new commitment to corporate social responsibility is a sham, behind which the search for profit carries on as before, leaving capitalism in good shape after all." Economist. November 17, 2001 "Corporate social responsibility is just the way of the world. It is about a change in world-wide consciousness. The train is moving – in some countries slowly maybe and in some countries faster – but it is moving. And businesses can either get on board or get off." Joseph Blumberg, Vice-President, Grupo M.

By the late 1990s, many multi-national corporations (MNCs) were redefining their role in society and their responsibility to human rights and the environment. This phenomenon, termed corporate social responsibility (CSR), has since received considerable attention from supporters and critics alike. Supporters claim that CSR provides corporations with an opportunity to do well while doing good. Critics counter that CSR, as a voluntary initiative, is little more than a public relations strategy to increase market share and boost corporate profits. [3]

2.3.1 Definition of CSR:

A good working definition can be found in a Conference Board of Canada document entitled Corporate Social Responsibility: Turning Words into Action (1999): "Corporate social responsibility is the overall relationship of the corporation with all of its stakeholders. These

include customers, employees, communities, owners/investors, government, suppliers and competitors. Elements of social responsibility include investment in community outreach, employee relations, creation and maintenance of employment, environmental responsibility, human rights and financial performance.”[3]

2.3.2 CSR's Staying Power

A Sufi philosopher once said “the more you study it, the less you understand it.” Such is the enigma of corporate social responsibility. At times, CSR presents itself as a credible tool for balancing the pursuit of profit with respect for people and the planet. At other times, CSR appears to be the latest corporate strategy designed to convince the public that capitalism can be compassionate. I believe that the current economic downturn will offer a new perspective from which to examine corporate social responsibility. Some companies may resist the temptation to view CSR programs as non-essential, promotional exercises that can only be indulged in during times of high profitability. Others will not. But the fate of CSR cannot rest entirely on corporations. Consumers and shareholders must be vigilant in their support for companies committed to corporate social responsibility. Self-Regulation or Government Regulation? Many believe that governments missed the opportunity, by choice or by circumstance, to contribute to the development of a corporate accountability framework because they were preoccupied with trade liberalization, privatization, and deficit elimination. So the CSR framework was developed without the adequate participation of the public sector and it is important to understand what the implications of its absence have been. Polarizing the options of self-regulation and government regulation denies the discovery of other models that may better meet the collective goals of business, public agencies, and NGOs. Until such a compromise is reached, it appears that we are left with the flawed CSR patchwork of non-regulatory codes of conduct, voluntary standards, and social audits.

Corporate social responsibility should be viewed as a process and not as a destination. It emerged in response to public disillusionment with the traditional role of business and continues to be driven by a combination of forces involving consumers, shareholders, and citizens. Over the last five years, efforts have been made to strengthen the CSR movement through rigorous processes of standardizing, reporting, and auditing social and environmental performance. The challenges facing CSR in the global economy are reflected in its limited acceptance by the oil and gas sector. For the most part, energy companies are looking for opportunities to engage corporate social responsibility that remain within the parameters of the traditional business model. There remains, overall, an uncertainty over corporate social responsibility and its related infrastructure. If the status quo continues, however, corporate social responsibility will likely be dismissed as a management strategy that secures work for public relations consultants and social auditors but not much more. [3]

Responsibility in management, both internal and external, is a natural and constant topic within a company whose activities affect many aspects of society, and which at the same time, through its innovations, is involved in shaping the future of our society. In our personnel development measures the topic ‘responsibility’ is indeed touched on in many ways – but most of the time only touched upon and not dealt with explicitly.

This taking-for-granted with which the issue ‘responsibility’ is treated can far too easily lead to a failure to see that there are a great many situations where it’s initially not at all obvious what a responsible decision might look like. On top of this, a general shift in values means one can no longer automatically say that decisions are made and carried out on the basis of a particular set of shared common values. [4]

2.4 Environmental responsibility

The value of environmental responsibility to a company’s bottom line cannot be overstated. Of all the topics related to corporate social responsibility, environmental initiatives have produced the greatest amount of quantifiable data linking proactive companies with positive financial results. In recent years, companies of all sizes and sectors have realized a wide

range of both tangible and intangible benefits from their efforts to reduce waste, maximize resource efficiency and design or redesign products and services while taking the environment into consideration. These benefits include[1]:

Improved Financial Performance: Numerous studies have shown that companies with strong environmental records experience superior financial performance.

Decreased Costs: There are hundreds of case studies of companies that have dramatically reduced costs through waste reduction, energy efficiency, pollution prevention and resource productivity.

Innovation: Several companies have harnessed their environmental commitment to spur innovation inside their own companies and among their suppliers by applying environmental principles to the design and production of products. In some cases, this has led to more efficient practices or entirely new products.

Asset Retention: Several companies have demonstrated the potential for recapturing the value of the assets embedded in their products by leasing them rather than selling them, thereby increasing profits while selling less product. Others have designed parts that are intended to be removed from a used machine, refurbished and used in a newer model. These efforts are potentially reducing landfill waste, hazardous waste or air or water emissions.

Quality: Some environmental initiatives have improved workers' productivity and reduced errors and defects.

Brand Image: Companies have used environmental responsibility as a means of enhancing their reputation or brand image, which, in turn, has been shown both to increase sales and to attract investment capital and trading partners. [1]

3 Ethics

Ethics often seems to be a very abstract term. People talk about the importance of ethics and the impact of not having an ethical code, but do they also put it into practice? It is important to understand the connection of what is said and how it is implemented. It is useless, even wrong, to talk about deep thought and great ideas, and then to forget or even refuse to put them into practice. This is valid in personal lives as much as in business.

3.1 Ethical reflections

1. *Ethics challenges international relations* and the politics and practices of development in very concrete ways. Development means getting on with the fight against poverty and marginalisation. Ethics challenge political pragmatism and provide signposts for equity, justice, participation and inclusion. Fighting poverty is a moral imperative. [6]
2. *Ethics and business* is not something new. However, until recently, responsibility for setting standards for the conduct of business and ensuring that economic wealth was equitably shared was assumed by governments acting individually or collectively through international institutions. This allocation of responsibilities, however, is rapidly changing under the influences of globalization. With the advance of globalization, the view that the sole responsibility of corporations is to earn profits for their shareholders is increasingly difficult to maintain. The elimination of corruption, respect for human rights, adequate working conditions for labour, and healthy local communities are all stimulants to economic growth and development. [5]
3. A *value framework* means little unless applied to action and choice, behaviour and relationships. By people and groups, within nations and across nations. And especially by those in power. Expressions of values are open for differences of interpretation. Values may also compete. Sometimes in ways that make choice

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extremely difficult. But competing values can also be used as an excuse for not being willing to engage in ethical analysis and take the consequence of it. The time has come to speak more concretely and more openly about the way we pursue interests and the way we make compromise as individuals and institutions in development. [6]

4. We cannot escape the fact that many people have said the right things for a very long time. Still it seems so difficult to convert words to actions, and so easy to cover up double agendas. We must somehow break this pattern. Because we are at risk of losing credibility. We see a *growing apathy and opposition* in reaction to institutions that do not respond. Seattle and Prague gave evidence of system failure. If we are to break this pattern, we need to squarely face the shortcomings and contradictions of our policies and actions. The time has come to speak more concretely and more openly about the way we pursue interests and the way we make compromise as individuals and institutions in development. The ethical imperative in development is to break the forces and interests that sustains poverty, powerlessness and marginalisation. [6]
5. *We are not dealing with an even playing field.* Some have more options than others do and therefore also more obligations. Others have hardly access to choice. The voice of the weakest part needs to be heard and respected when the agenda for development is being shaped and implemented. It may be disagreement about what good development is. But it is little disagreement about what development is not and what the barriers are. Partnership in development means joining forces to overcome those barriers. It demands access to information and negotiating power for all parties involved. With the unequal partnership and complex patterns of interests, there is a need for agreed codes of conduct, based on a shared value framework. There is a need for explicit global ethics. [6]
6. The basic, unifying *framework for ethical behaviour* by governments is, and must be, the internationally agreed human rights. These are ethical, moral imperatives to which we have all agreed. We have accepted their authority. This must have consequences for us. [6]
7. We, who are part of the "*global development business*" on the donor side, whether in the multilateral or bilateral sphere, need to constantly measure our actions against this tough standard. How do we exercise power and influence? Policies and relations must be assessed as to whether they promote values such as dignity, equity, justice, inclusion and participation. This applies to the whole range of issues decision-makers face; trade and security, immigration and environment, economic policies at home and abroad and policies and programs for economic development in developing countries. In a globalising world we need to ask the really tough ethical questions, and be willing to engage in an honest dialogue about the international system we are all part of, in terms of how it serves the stated agenda for fighting poverty which is globally shared. [6]
8. Today's *multilateral system* was set up after the terrible experiences of Second World War. The rationale was primarily ethical: to force each and every state to take responsibility for the system, the whole. To protect the weakest. To find negotiated solutions. Getting there requires synergies in political choice and diversity and creativity in response. Providing an enabling framework for this to come about, is the overarching challenge of the multilateral system. Also the emerging conceptual debate about global public goods should be seen in this context. The UN consultations on Financing for Development carry important potential in this regard. [6]
9. The UN Security Council is a *multilateral forum with obvious ethical connotations and challenges*. Whose security are we concerned with? Security in what sense? We have heard several people speak about poverty as a security problem. Not so much in terms of world stability, although that is also relevant, but more as a security problem for those affected most by poverty. The poor themselves. In this regard proliferation of arms, and especially small arms in poor societies, is a critical security

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problem hurting the poor most of all. Also here there are double agendas that need to be exposed and dealt with in international relations. [6]

10. Few issues bring out the *ethical challenges* and contradictions more clearly than those related to environment. This is true all the way from the local level and up through the national, the regional and the global. Clearly, industrialised countries have a particular responsibility for our global environment. In effect, it is our actions to date that have brought about a large portion of the environmental problems today at the global level. We must face up to that responsibility, be willing to expose interests and assess ethical imperatives, short term and long term. May be more than in any other area we need to apply a shared framework for ethical analysis against which seemingly competing interests can be examined to guide policy choice and allow transparency and accountability. [6]
11. Neither the poverty problem, nor the environmental problems can find solutions without co-operation across all geographical and economic divides. We need to work together, to bring in the resources, ingenuity, intelligence and determination so abundantly available also in developing countries--if we are to make real progress. High capacity industrial countries have a particular responsibility to enable especially the poorest countries to participate fully in the global negotiations that will affect their future. This means help to build capacity and negotiating power, help to access information and options. It is part of what honesty and fairness must be about. [6]
12. In the age of globalisation, the ethical challenge clearly goes beyond governments. The big corporations and conglomerates, as well as smaller enterprises, have a big stake in global economic development and play the lead role in forming it. There is a growing realisation world-wide that business has a moral responsibility of its own. It goes beyond simply abiding by the law, whatever that might be in a given country. It is about abiding by shared, universal human values. Again taking the human rights seriously. Taking human dignity seriously. [6]
13. Much has been achieved in terms of establishing a global agenda of Corporate Social Responsibility. But, most of the job is still left undone. So far the concrete, practical implications are few and far apart. Here, business leaders, government representatives, experts from academia, and NGO representatives meet to discuss how to advance the ability of business to be a force for good, especially when investing abroad. This forum has brought the debate up to a new level. The parties are now discovering a common ground, and a common interest in making real improvements. Other countries have similar initiatives. Since the Corporate Sector has its own international networks and linkages, this can be an important force for change and even corrective to governments. In similar ways the NGO networks have an essential role in watching and pushing the agenda forward. [6]

The issues I have addressed so far are outside the realm of development co-operation as it is traditionally defined, but are highly related to the ethical responsibility faced by OECD countries. Let me now turn more specifically to the field of international development co-operation and highlight some emerging issues that demand attention and, quite simply, better conduct by us as the donor community[6]:

- First and foremost we need to define more explicitly what our commitments as so called "developed countries" or "donors" are. The concept of charity must not cloud definite responsibility.
- A new standard of transparency and accountability by donors and development institutions must be established. We must practice what we preach.
- Aid receiving governments and people must have the entitlement to own and steer the developmental course. This is what the Comprehensive Development Framework must be about. It is of critical importance that the process around the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) be subjected to this standard, rather than becoming yet another top-down initiative programmed by technocrats.

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- We need new, innovative forms of co-operation and partnership that can draw on the strengths and resources of the private sector, the public sector, and knowledge and research centres.
- Debt relief for the heaviest indebted, poor countries is a precondition for development. Sustainable debt relief is a moral imperative and we must carry this agenda forward.
- Finally, we need to do a better job at home in terms of communicating to our citizens why international co-operation for economic development is so important. The ethical dimension needs to come out more strongly, including the notion of moral duty. [6]

Again, human rights provide the best basis in this regard. In the light of all the above, a lead issue in pursuing ethics and development is real commitment to good governance. Not just on the part of developing countries, but also on the part of us in the industrialised world. [6]

3.3 Code of ethics

A code of ethics can perform a variety of functions. Frankel (1989) lists eight roles that a code of ethics has played for professional associations. [4]

ETHICS...

... serves as an enabling document
... acts as a source for public evaluation
... aids with professional socialization
... enhances a profession's reputation and public trust
... entrenched professional biases
... unethical behaviour
... provides a support system for members
... acts as a basis for adjudicating disputes.

These functions are goals that members of a profession aspire to. A code of ethics is one means of accomplishing these goals. [4]

The standard code of ethics is defined as an obligation to others. It is an obligation to society in general, to funders and employers, to colleagues and professions and to other human subjects.

To society in general	To Funders and Employers	To Colleagues and the Profession	To Human Subjects
work for the benefit of society	no conflict of interest	disclose sufficient information to allow verification of work specific to the individual discipline	maintain confidentiality
prevent misuse of findings	be qualified	add to the field (knowledge, stature)	obtain informed consent
practice integrity	no misleading marketing	cite work appropriately	protect from harm and exploitation

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pursue objectivity	impartially provide alternatives	do not exaggerate prowess of field	avoid undue intrusion
use due care	don't sell same product twice	do not bump an engaged colleague	
do not withhold facts	no pre-empted or guaranteed outcomes	evaluate others fairly	
communicate findings widely	hold their confidential information	report unprofessional conduct	
strive for citizen involvement	accept their decision unless illegal or against public good	provide equal work opportunity	
speak out when necessary		know cross-disciplinary requirements	

How do you arrive at ethical codes? Is it going to be a single set of values - which smacks of environmental indoctrination and 'greenwashing' - or a discourse? How do you teach environmental ethics? Or can they only be learnt? Should it be like teaching religion? Were there going to be a variety of views expressed? [7]

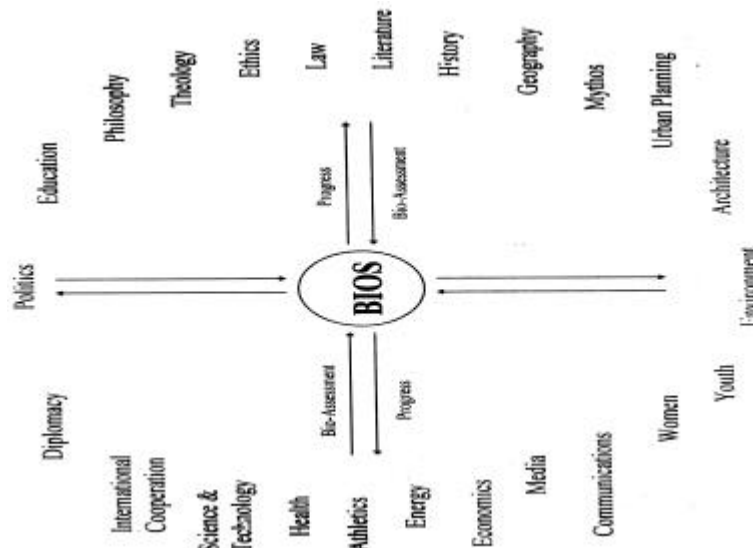
3.4 Code of ethics for corporation

A CODE OF ETHICS FOR A CORPORATION IS A COMPLEX STATEMENT THAT DOES FOUR THINGS FOR ITS DIRECTORS, MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES TO GOVERN THEMSELVES [5]:

- it identifies as clearly and concisely as possible the mission or guiding purpose of the organization;
- it sets out the core values essential to achieving its mission;
- it sets out the principles that are to be respected in all interactions with stakeholders, that is to say, its shareholders, clients or customers, employees and pensioners, suppliers, the local communities in which it does business and others affected by what it does;
- finally, it sets out rules that are designed to ensure that the principles and values are put into action. While codes of ethics that have some or all of these characteristics are now quite common, research and experience indicate that they are not enough. What else is required? Creating a code and failing to take steps necessary to ensure that the code is respected can actually encourage unethical and irresponsible conduct. [5]

3.5 Ethics and modern corporation

BIOS IN THE NEXT MILLENIUM



The idea that business should be conducted ethically is not a new one. Neither is the idea that business should be conducted in socially responsible ways. For most of the last century, however, responsibility for setting standards for the conduct of business and ensuring that economic wealth was shared in some fashion across all segments of society was assumed by governments acting individually or collectively. In the industrialized countries of Western Europe and North America, democratically elected governments have enshrined human rights in law. Welfare safety nets have been put in place to protect people from the worst effects of unemployment, and measures to protect standards of public health have been instituted.

Acting collectively through international institutions like the United Nations and the International Labour Organization, governments around the world have set international human and labour rights standards proclaimed as having universal applicability. By assuming primary responsibility for social concerns and environmental standards, governments left business free to focus attention on the generation of goods and services and the maximization of profits. In developing countries, the proposal that the primary purpose of business was to enrich owners and shareholders has provided companies and their managers with a justification for not getting involved in broader social issues touching on human rights or working conditions, or the quality of life of people in the communities in which they generated their profits. [5]

What is driving these changes? Any attempt to answer this question would have to include the following factors[5]:

1. **The emerging global market:** This phenomenon has clear implications for multinational companies and exporters. Even local companies that have no intention of doing business abroad must today be prepared to meet competition that might emerge from anywhere in the world. While there may be an emerging global market, there is no evidence of an emerging global business culture defining ethically appropriate and inappropriate business practice in that market.
2. **Decentralized management responsibility:** The flattening or de-layering of the modern corporation is a second important factor. Many companies have concluded that if they are to be successful in very competitive environments, they must decentralize responsibility and reduce management supervision and control.

3. **Moral disasters and scandal:** A crucial factor in the emergence of codes of ethics and interest in corporate social responsibility has been the occurrence of moral disasters, mistakes in judgement that have carried heavy costs for the corporations responsible for them and for their victims. Scandals have highlighted for many companies the very substantial financial risks that can be triggered by unethical behaviour. They have also raised serious doubts about the capacity of traditional approaches to management and corporate governance to ensure ethically responsible conduct on the part of management and employees in a contemporary business environment.
4. **Global value systems:** Finally, with globalization has come the need to work across value systems shaped by very different cultures and faith traditions. As a consequence, common understandings of the ethical responsibilities and rights of employees, whether management or labour, as well as the ethical contours of relations with suppliers, clients, owners and shareholders, and other corporate shareholders, can no longer be taken for granted in business. The current interest of corporations in business ethics grows out of these changes. Further, the ability of states to regulate international commerce has been constrained, albeit with the consent of governments, by free trade agreements such as NAFTA and the WTO. While multinational corporations are operating globally, there is no global legal framework governing corporate behaviour. One response to the loss of regulatory control on the part of nation states has been to urge more effective corporate self-regulation governed by codes of ethics based on widely endorsed standards. Support for this response has been motivated by a complex and interconnected range of considerations. For governments, achieving consensus on standards of conduct voluntarily implemented has been advocated as a way of cutting costs required by more formal regulatory systems. In some cases, self-regulation has been seen as a way of reducing political pressure for regulatory intervention. [5]

3.6 Strategy – ethics

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION REQUIRES A COMPANY-WIDE STRATEGY DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT ETHICAL COMMITMENTS ARE MET THROUGHOUT A COMPANY'S OPERATIONS. THIS MEANS[5]:

- i) **Effective communication:** People cannot respond to an ethics code they do not know or understand. Neither are they likely to take seriously a code that is not publicly and frequently endorsed by senior management, particularly the CEO or a code created without their participation and involvement.
- ii) **Education and training:** Education and training sessions give employees at all levels an opportunity to examine typical applications of the code in their particular areas of responsibility and explore the application of the code where the right answer is less than obvious and straight forward.
- iii) **Penalties for non-compliance and rewards for exemplary conduct:** If the code is not enforced, it is unlikely to be respected. Penalties that respond to the seriousness of a breach of the code signal commitment to code implementation. Rewarding those who respect the code is also an effective way to communicate a company's commitment to building an ethical corporate culture.
- iv) **Confidential counselling and reporting:** Surveys of employees show that one of the most difficult challenges in building an ethical corporate culture is persuading employees that reporting problems or seeking advice on ethical issues will not result in criticism, censure or punishment. A system that allows employees to communicate concerns with a view either to reporting unethical conduct or seeking out advice in a difficult situation is therefore an important component of any ethics program. Equally important is feedback from the company detailing how it has dealt with concerns communicated confidentially.

- v) **Internal monitoring:** Like every aspect of effective management, systematically monitoring the success in implementing the ethics code is important. Consistent effective monitoring can provide valuable quality control information and alert a company to problems before they become serious.
- vi) **Independent ethics and social audits:** A final and emerging component of ethics programs, independent ethics audits will be used increasingly to assist management to determine how effectively their ethics code is being implemented and to give credibility to the claims that a company is committed to being a good corporate citizen. [5]

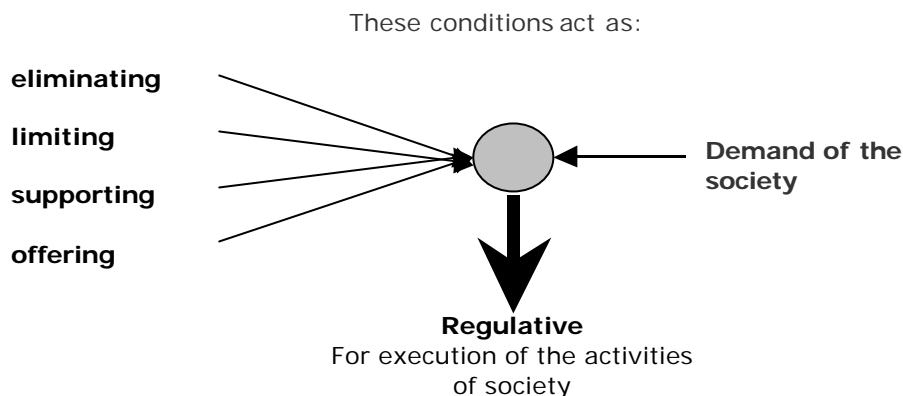
3.7 The road ahead

1. Social conditions have been shaped by many factors and influences. One of those influences has been the failure of the business community to accept that it has social responsibilities that extend beyond the minimum requirements of the law or even to respect the law where political conditions allowed them to do otherwise.
2. Research and experience show that the elimination of corruption, respect for human rights, adequate working conditions for labour, and healthy local communities are all stimulants to economic growth and development. It is also increasingly clear that with globalization these goals will be difficult to achieve by governments or business acting alone.
3. Business leaders, government leaders and voluntary sector organizations in the Americas must work together to create conditions of the development of democratic institutions and sound standards of business conduct. It is encouraging to note that three Latin American countries, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, signed the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions (1999). Negotiations for a hemispheric free trade agreement (the FTAA) are providing good opportunities for the Americas to tackle corruption in government procurement and other trading measures.
4. Finally, changes in the business environment are opening the doors to increased cooperation between governments, the private sector and civil society organizations. A number of companies are now working in partnership with voluntary organizations and governments to solve social problems associated with development in socially responsible ways. [5]

3.8 Environment and Ethics

We understood above, what ethics is and how it comes across with business and people and corporations. Now I would like to say something about the relation of ethics with environment.

The requirements of the home of the 21st century suggest that we are talking about a fundamental change – a break – in human history. The change of the home from a place where one only sleeps and spends the evenings to a place which is a continuous place of work, life and rest requires in a sense a return to nature, communitarian life and communitarian relationships. This will require a change of the way nature, people and most importantly the ethics of relationships are perceived. The ethics of relationships will consist in a way of growth; procedures that will teach us to live in a conflict-less way where we will be less attached to material things and where we will arrive at a qualitatively higher level of human society. [8]



When I am describing this I have the impression that I am exceedingly optimistic and idealistic. On the other hand there are some small elements of development in individual countries that teach us that even the greatest optimist could not imagine the fast rate of growth in the near future compared to what will actually happen. For example, in the seventies people in the United States were expecting to have one hundred thousand cellular phones in the next ten years and in fact their number grew to 10 million. So the most courageous predictions are weak in comparison to what can happen in the development of human society in the 21st century. In the thirties to the fifties of last century nobody could have foreseen such an explosion of informatisation as is the case. In this light we should look at the home of the next century as on something which we are aiming at without being completely clear about it. For this reason we need to listen to visionaries, artists who intuit our future situation more accurately.

Each sovereign state needs to develop its environmental politics in harmony with the international context. From this follows that entrepreneurship, the behaviour of sectors, but also the private sphere – here we think of housing development – should behave according to international legislature and conventions which are environmentally friendly. It is necessary to follow some business transactions that give advantages to weaker countries in the case of the sale of commodities that do not fulfil stringent environmental criteria.

In the development of housing it is necessary to see the macro-view – the global view which talks about following the development of mega-trends in the area of laws and conventions. At the same time the micro-view needs to be unified which talks about building materials, the use of elements, preparation of architecture, harmony with the environment in which the home is to be built and most importantly the impact on people who will live in these homes. Here the ethical and social questions become of importance.

The internal structure of homes needs to support the system of recycling which is introduced at a certain cultural level of a given state or city. An important factor is the use of energy already at the stage of building the homes and the use of energy in individual homes in the future. Here we are thinking mainly of insulating materials (supporting the environment), special construction of windows and doors for good heat and sound insulation whereby it is very important to ensure an internal ventilation of the system – i.e. we are talking about the level of oxygen and ionisation – and the above mentioned point of view of the work environment in which people live most of the time.

To the above mentioned concepts of the home we need to add a well thought out system for recreation in a way where the places for recreation would be near the homes – they should be in every larger group of conglomerate homes – so that even going from the home to these centres of recreation would be part of recreation. There should also be some green zones (without access for cars, pollution) with more harmony and comfort so that the intensive work in the homes could be counterbalanced in these environments.

The organisation Biopolitics (lead by Dr. Vlavianos Arvanitis) suggests that present society will change on the basis of the expansion of socio-economic values whereby it will be strongly influenced by technological development. This change will be one to a more stable

society which will respect the bios and support and harmonise the bio-environment whereby each member – whether human, other living creature or non-living – is an element of the system and therefore also the value of the whole bios.

According to their view there will be a harmonisation of politics, diplomacy, education, all scientific disciplines, philosophy, theology, ethics etc. with art and technological development in the 21st century. Further it will all be co-ordinated internationally so that the development doesn't have a negative impact on the environment.

The basic law of democracy in terms of economics talks about a certain limitation of the rights and relationships of ownership which must be limited on the basis of knowledge and understanding and be the basis for decisions for entrepreneurs in market conditions so as not to go against the principles of democracy but at the same time to prevent the violation of the environment and the social sphere. According to the definition of the social law of democracy, the economy is only one of the aspects and dimensions of the wide range of human activity.

In developing housing we need to harmonise the strategic, political, entrepreneurial, social and scientific aspects from the point of view of ethics. [8]

In effect we are talking about the ethics of creating and dividing profits which has more than just the economic dimension. Profit has a far deeper definition already at the point where it is made. Every member of the process of making profit is a co-creator of that profit and hence has certain rights of taking part in the decision making concerning the profit including decisions about its future use. There are some new economic theories that talk about a three-part division of profit [8]:

- 1 profit which will be used for renewing the process of producing the profit
- 2 profit which has social impacts on its environment
- 3 profit to be used for a harmonisation between development and the environment – in a sense this part of the profit ought to be used for the application of new technologies for the conservation of the environment, for recycling and in the process of harmonising the relationship of development and nature. [8]

The internal requirements for a home of the 21st century can be expressed in the following seven aspects[8]:

The first aspect is that of work and economy where the home needs to provide a work environment with minimal economic demands on structure, architecture and construction of the home. It need to be on a contemporary level, create a social environment and support the standing of the person within it.

The second aspect is health – we speak of a healthy environment that is preventive towards illnesses, difficulties and pain. The home needs to be designed so that the ill person – member of the family – can find a peaceful place during illness.

The thirds aspect describes the relationship with others. This means that we want to create such elements in the internal structure of the home which facilitate inter-human relationships and which do not disrupt communication and work and are sufficiently tolerant solutions so as to make collaboration, communication and the listening to one another possible.

The next aspect is harmony – here we try to create part of the home where we store clothing which in future should not be a store of old things but, relative to one's standing, it should provide a system for innovating one's wardrobe so that the clothes would articulate the physical and mental harmony of the person.

In the 21st century this aspect – the *aspect of communication* – will be one of the most important ones as it is connected with the working life of each one of us. The home should facilitate an intelligent exchange of experiences; it should create conditions for security and confidence in oneself of its inhabitants. With its environment the home should help the

increase of a positive attitude so that this could manifest itself in audio and video communication in the future.

The last aspect is the aspect of studying – here occurs the first element of the process of lifelong learning in fact learning in general. We should be able to collect our knowledge, for example using the computer we should be able to share our knowledge with the members of our family. Further we should be able to collect information from a range of media including the mass media, arrive at our goal via information communicating networks were we could also express our views o certain events. We should also be able to do as pragmatic things as ordering groceries, technical and hygienic things and live out socio–biologic life in full compatibility with the system of learning.[8]

In general we can say that these seven aspects provide a supporting environment for a fuller life of the person helping also with the creation of relationships between people and communities so that a harmonisation of everyday life comes about with a minimal amount of stress which could later grow into conflicts and create the basis for international tension.

The present material tries to describe the systemic links that have to do with the concept of housing development and the relationship of homes to people who will live in them. We understand this environment as a support for the future more harmonic development of humanity and the removal of some historical baggage – mistakes which until now have limited deeper relationships between people and communities. In this sense of the word the 21st century should be an environment of tolerance and should create mutual communication between individual and target groups.

4 Education

As I mentioned in the introduction, it is not a natural thing to understand our responsibility towards the environment. It is not obvious, that business is always ethical. It is a matter of education. It depends on us whether we bring up children, who understand their responsibility towards the environment and towards the next generations. It depends on us whether we offer courses for today's businessmen, to show them another possible way to act. Education plays a vary important role in this field.

4.1 Long-range environmental education – children

Children need to be involved in the formulation and process of environmental education. The uncertainty of environmental knowledge and science presents a key problem for environmental education. There is no definitive data set on the environment, which can be simply taught to children. The contested body of environmental information is constantly evolving. Quantification and dissemination of environmental information does not equate with environmental education. The process of Environmental Education (EE) needs to be specifically considered because it does not have a traditional place in core subjects of the national curriculum. EE needs to include local knowledge - education has to be relevant to children's experiences and lived spaces as well as including more abstract aspects of environmental hypothesising. Although the complexity of theoretical philosophy is problematic deep thinking is a fundamental criteria of environmental education. EE needs to be grounded but there also needs to be an international perspective. Environmental problems are related to attitudes and lifestyles. The relationship between EE and ethics is not an easy, win-win situation. Difficult decisions though do have to be, and are, taken. EE needs to include education about power and politics which affect policy choices in real world situations. EE needs to start from an early age, but environmental action is not the sole responsibility of the young. Adults can not devolve responsibility for current actions and attitudes. Teachers currently involved in EE often feel isolated and marginalised from others in the teaching community. They are often classified as 'green' fanatics because of their minority status. EE would benefit from better networking and sharing of experiences, within and beyond schools. Environmental ethics need the skills taught by education of literacy and numeracy. Ethics and education are not mutually exclusive. Environmental Ethics requires critical thinking, logic and language skills – education for the environment needs capacity-building. EE in schools needs to be realistic about what it can deliver. The importance of out-of-school learning and the power of peers and the media should be recognised. It should be integrated into core subjects not isolated and outside the core curriculum as this devalues its

importance in the wider school arena. EE should include feelings of place (emotions, reactions, values) as well as knowledge about place (information). The recognition of all value judgements in life need to be more openly discussed in education. This would make it easier to cope with the subjective judgements inevitable in EE, but which are also omnipresent in other aspects of education.[7]

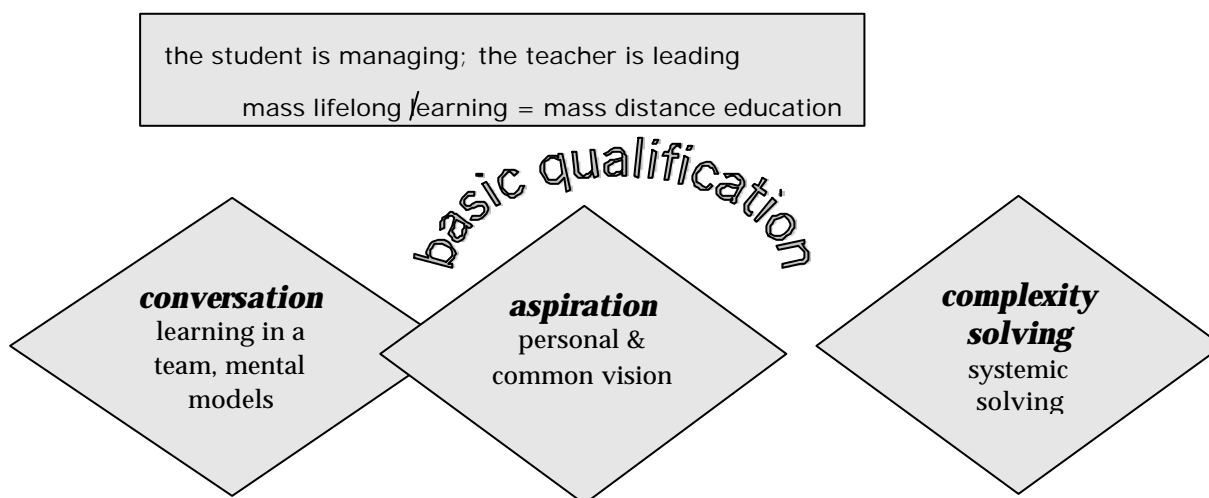
4.2 Lifelong learning - adults

The demand of the labour market for highly qualified, educated university students or adults from continuous education is controlled with some tools of the quality control of education. There are two different units which we can identify in the process of environmental education. The first is connected with the administrative treatment of students on the level of registration, consultancy and evaluation – assessments. The second is focusing on the context and subject-related part of the educational procedure. The general transformation of the educational system in Slovakia expects a much higher emphasis on multidisciplinary education within which the students are able to learn from different real cases through case studies or through multidisciplinary education with the support of multimedia. Personalities which we need on the labour market for environmental topics come from a managerial orientation or from financial decision making but there are still not enough specialists for environmental legislation. The whole educational system is focusing more on general education and in this way there is missing a huge amount of key specialists for setting up strategies for preparation policies and for the implementation of the environmental knowledge on the macro and micro levels.

The quality of education should focus more on the growth of individual responsibilities which is still missing due to so called mass education from the socialist era. There is expected a continuous transformation from the educational system more to the learning orientation and much more to the conceptual multidisciplinary understanding of the existing and needed knowledge for different positions and functions.[9]

The main factor in education is the respecting of human life without conditions. The attitude of a human being, resulted from its deep essence and influenced by upbringing and education, is deepened in the family, which is a place of possible growth (negative or positive) of experiences and knowledge and at the same time it is a habitual continuation of a microclimate of man (personality), which is cultivated further and maturity of a personality is manifested in case of a critical situation. [9]

The entire system of lifelong learning needs to adapt itself gradually and at the same time it needs to perfect itself in relation to the overall system of transformation in individual regions as well as the state as a whole. The mutual influence of society on the one hand and the individual and system of education on the other is very marked in particular as regards transformation.



Based on our experience of the last few years we have taken a more thorough look at all student-related activities which help the learning process of managers. We have reviewed the process starting with the student's first contact with the university until the moment when they start to learn. Here we found that most managers or potential managers drop out in the period between the point when they first show interest and the first tutorial. The next logical element is the period between the first tutorial and the exam, where weekly monitoring meetings are organised in which we analyse the tutorial of structural groups from the point of view of the managers and we are looking for ways of improving the relationship between students and tutors.

From the academic point of view we collect information on the quality of study materials, the process of tutorials and the evaluation of students - managers at the residential school. Students are very sensitive to various levels of academic activity, as there is often a significant difference between the student's level of education and the level required by the study materials (we are talking about adult education which differs substantially from conventional university education).

Our experience with consulting managers - students shows us those parts of the system, where student services need to be speedier and more sensitive. This is for example the case when students decide whether to continue with their studies. An important element in the managers learning system is the balance between the auto-didactical part and the elements which resemble face-to-face teaching.

The last few years have shown that our strategy of not changing everything in lifelong learning at once was correct. In the first years of translating and transforming study materials we have placed the emphasis on the contents of the skills and knowledge being communicated in the materials. In the following five years the focus was on more fully understanding the methodology of lifelong learning and gradually also that of lifelong learning. After years of experience we are far more sensitive to certain details which are a necessary prerequisite for enhancing the manager's comfort while learning. This is first of all the balance between the amount of theoretical knowledge and case studies and examples provided in a particular part of the study materials.[9]

4.3 Learning

In the near future we are concentrating on different technological and methodological supports which would help us to make our educational procedure much more efficient. We are planning to concentrate on three groups of persons within our education[9]:

- the first group of persons are specialists in different subjects (management and the environment, computer science, telecommunications and design and artificial intelligence)
- the second group are managers who need a much more global approach and information, and more co-ordinating and synchronising work
- the third group is the public - women in management, environmental education for the public

Co-ordination of education will spread from three sources:

- concentration of knowledge - skills / experiences of students
- increase in the global understanding of problems
- a deeper understanding of social and environmental aspects of life.[9]

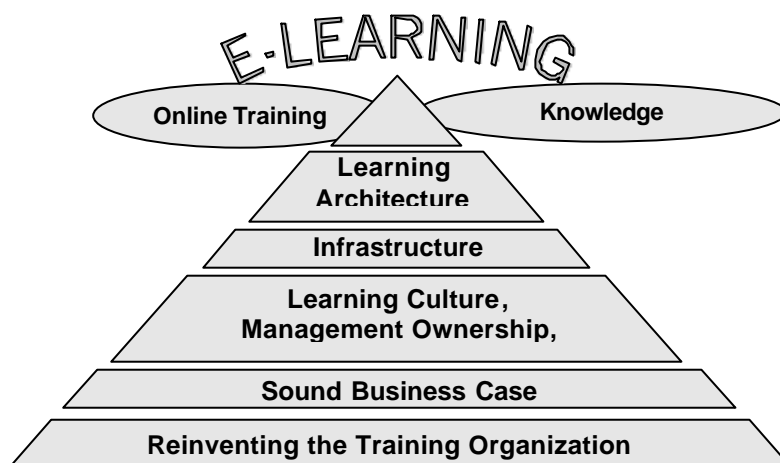
There are many organisations which spend 30 - 50 % of their energy on the process of training their staff who leave at the moment when they begin to be of use to their company. Due to this fact we have taken the following approach in the strategic management of our university: first of all we focus on the growth of the individual, as this is a contribution from the point of view of society as a whole. However, from the point of view

of the organisation this is a relative loss. It is relative, as it is a loss of investment in the employee who is leaving, but it is a gain as the organisation is now looking for a new more highly qualified employee. Therefore we are in a sense touching the concept of the learning organisation.

Lifelong learning in the past years was focusing on some of the new concepts. One of the most important concepts is the learning organisation. In this concept there is a systematic way of gathering ideas, common searching for strategies and all this is happening not only in team work but we are also speaking of team learning which is a substantial basis of the future, more efficient tools for knowledge management. In the modern companies or organisation there are also special changes in the organisational structure where the new positions for the officers responsible for knowledge management and there are also tools for the registration of knowledge, for the utilisation of knowledge and the implementation of the knowledge which a given organisation gathered in the last years and which is still available in a biological presence in the organisation in the heads of employees. [9]

4.4 Knowledge management, e-learning

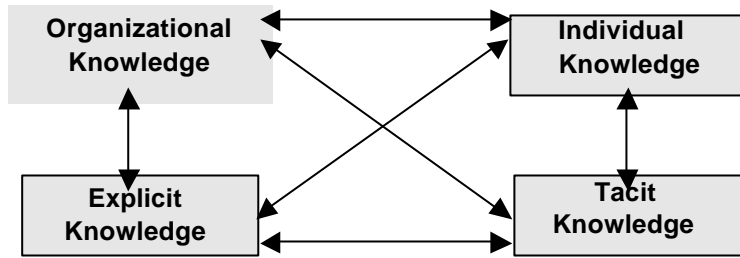
e-learning benefits: lowers costs, enhances business responsiveness, messages are consistent or customized, depending on need, content is more timely and dependable, learning is 24/7, no user "ramp-up" time, universality, builds community, scalability, leverages the corporate investment in the Web, provides an increasingly valuable customer service. [10]



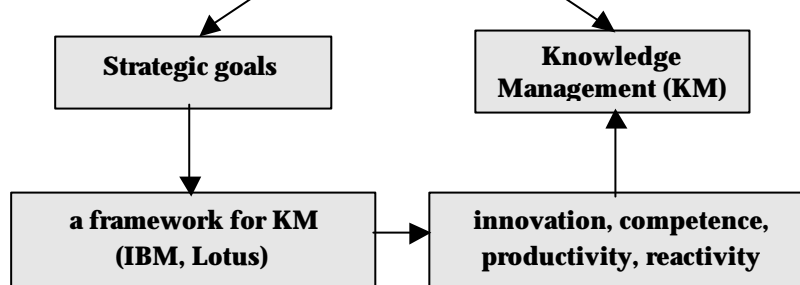
building a KM solution[10]:

Determine if the effort makes sense.	Prototype.	Understand the value of time.
Understand the community you are addressing.	If you include performance support, it should make work easier, not harder.	Establish key KM roles.
Know what you know.	Plan for the running of the KM system, not just the building.	Build in collaboration.
Master the content.	Work to generate the support you'll need going forward.	Balance codification (explicit knowledge) and collaboration (tacit knowledge).
Employ the technology of the enterprise.	One portal.	Incent and reward participation.
Develop a knowledge structure and test it.	Don't stop at document distribution.	Finally, don't be afraid to „hang“ online training from your KM system. [10]

Different types of knowledge require different approaches to knowledge management

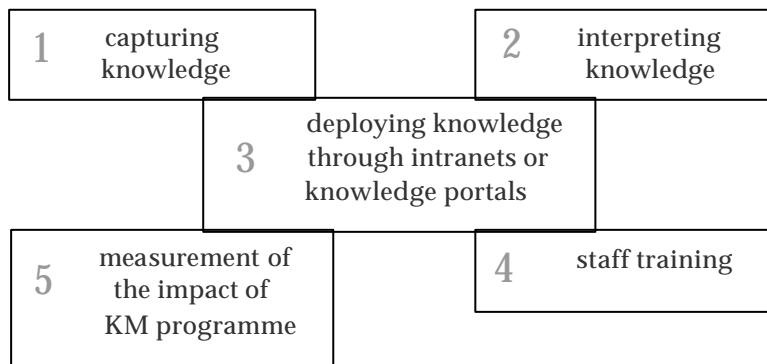


Knowledge activities



learning management systems [10]:	The ability to launch and track e-learning.	Organizational readiness information.
A common online course catalogue.	Learning assessments.	Customized reporting.
A common online registration system.	Management of learning materials.	Supporting collaboration and knowledge communities.
An up-front competency assessment tool.	Integrating knowledge management resources.	Systems integration.

Stages for achieving knowledge management (KM):



5 Conclusion

We must start with ourselves. Are we a net contributor of good or do we generate obstacles that render people and nations vulnerable? Better governance in international relations is as essential as national and local governance. It takes courage and commitment to examine choices and actions in a framework of explicit ethical values, and determination to overcome obstacles. It takes a special commitment to procedural justice, with transparency, participation and inclusion at its core. The framework must hold together charity and justice, compassion, solidarity and rights. It is not cheap and it creates risks, but it is the only way open if we aim for sustainable development, peace and dignity.

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