

Sustainability focused Master Degree Programme and Master's Thesis at Lahti University of Applied Sciences

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The purpose of the article is to introduce the sustainability focused Master Degree Programme in International Business Management at Faculty of Business Studies, Lahti University of Applied Sciences. The article is focusing on introducing our international Master Degree Programme and sustainability focused research done by Master Programme students. In addition to the general description of the programme, the article gives some examples of sustainable focused empirical research made by the students of the study group started in September 2008. The main stress on these studies is with descriptions of concrete business opportunities and business models for Finnish and international environment cluster companies.

Key words: Master Degree Programme, sustainability

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Sustainability focused Master Programme

The Master Degree Programme in International Business Management aims 1) to create new business and find sustainability oriented business opportunities between Finland and emerging markets, and 2) to create sustainable growth on Asian and other emerging markets. The third study group of this programme will start on autumn 2010 with a new curriculum. The new curriculum consists of five modules:

- Module A: Responsible Business and Sustainability (10 ects)
- Module B: International Business Management (30 ects)
- Module C: International Communication (10 ects)
- Module D: Research Methods and Writing (10 ects)
- Master's Thesis (30 ects).

The module A "Responsible Business and Sustainability" is a new module. With this module, we like to highlight and clearly show the focus of the programme. The objective of this module is to give in-depth view to the concepts of sustainability and corporate social responsibility. During this module, students get basic understanding about different approaches to the sustainability, sustainable growth and development, as well as sustainable and socially responsible investments and innovations, their impacts on business etc. Based on this understanding together with substantial business know-how and business management competence, students have possibilities to find potential sustainability focused business opportunities. In addition to the special module, the responsible business management and sustainability issues are deeply integrated into other modules too. They have also been an important part of Master Programme in previous years. As a concrete example of this is the International Project Management course which is shortly described below. This course is a

good example of how the sustainability issues and business subjects can be integrated in teaching.

Sustainability focused Project Management course

The master students of the last study group participated on a study project as part of the International Project Management course during the fall semester from 1st September to 21st December, 2009. The course in which the project was included was international project management and while in the course they studied project management theories, the real practise was done during the project. Along the whole fall semester the students developed and run a study project co-operating with and at the same time supervising a bachelor level student group.

In the project, the learning experience happened on two levels: Firstly, the aim of the project was to identify wanted amount of topics, decided by the students themselves, and same amount of target countries (focus was on emerging markets) of which the students would search information and evaluate and analyse business opportunities for Finnish environmental companies. Through this preliminary study, the master students acquired knowledge and understanding of these topics and then later they were able to choose their own individual topic for the master's thesis. On the other level of this project, the students were to learn how to develop a project organisation and to run the organisation and different roles in order to get the best possible results. Adding to the challenge was the fact that there were a group of over 40 bachelor students who were as an workforce to do the basic studies but also the role of the master students were to support and tutor the bachelor students in their own report. Both groups were international groups and gave that way an excellent opportunity to learn intercultural communications and difficulties of international project first hand.

Both groups, masters and bachelors made their own final reports and presented the findings in the end of the project. Both groups also evaluated the co-operation and the work of each other.

The project started with theory of project management and the different organisation models. The master students were then given a task to identify the relevant tasks and roles in the project and to form an organisation. After they had agreed on suitable organisation model and tasks, they chose people to different roles. First meeting of the organisation also agreed on three topics and three countries, that the study would focus on: Water, energy and waste and India, China and Vietnam.

The project manager and the country managers presented the study project to the bachelor students and divided them into three groups by the countries. Those groups were then managed by the country managers and they had certain amount of meetings together to assure things were in process. The master group also prepared a project plan with timetables and deliverables as well as

deadlines for each work. The master group divided into an organisation where project manager was responsible of arranging meetings for the whole master project group, communications and supervising each group's operations, country managers supervised and communicated with their own country group of bachelor students and then forwarded all the material to analysing groups, which were also separate for each country. The analysing group checked the information that was received from bachelors and analysed it and forwarded it then to the writers who wrote the final project report. The project manager was a chair in the project meetings and each member took minutes of the meeting in turns. Each member also had an opportunity to prepare a weekly status report to the project manager as well as to the teacher of the course, who was acting as a stakeholder in the project.

The study was made mainly by searching information from internet and articles. In the country groups, there were usually several persons who were from that country and had good access to local information and spoke local languages. The cultural know how was an advantage and helped in both finding the relevant information and understanding it.

The biggest benefits from working this way, was on the other hand that the students got a real life experience of a strict scheduled, multicultural project were they had to learn how to control the workflow and schedules so that all the work was done in time and the workload divided as evenly as possible among each others. And on the other hand, the project gave background information about environmental issues in the chosen target countries. This information was very important later when the students planned their thesis research.

Sustainability focuses Master's Thesis

Based on this way accumulated knowledge of water, energy and waste issues in India, China and Vietnam, most of students focused on sustainable energy issues such as use of renewable energy (especially business opportunities related to the wind but also other renewable energy sources), possibilities to decrease energy consumption (market potentials of eco-friendly cellulose insulation materials in India), and development of recycling and waste management systems, for example e-waste recycling and solid waste management in India and China. Some of these thesis are shortly described in the next few chapters.

Do Thi Bich Hang's (2009) study "**Wind power supply to Phu Quoc Island district, Kien Giang province, Vietnam**" presents a proposal of wind power plant project in Phu Quoc island district. The study proposes a business model for Finnish companies to invest in wind energy business in Phu Quoqc. In the empirical research, Hang has interviewed local authorities, local hotels, and local residents as well as Electricity Vietnam and Hanoi University of Technology. The empirical research shows that there are sufficient wind resources and en-

couraged investment policies for this kind of business. As a business model Hang proposes 100 % foreign investment entry.

Nina Harjula's (2009) study "**Marketing strategy for retailing small-scale wind energy turbines in Indian market**" analyses the small-scale wind energy markets in Mumbai. The study is focused on questions: How feasible is the wind energy for SME businesses in Mumbai? What are the main challenges and opportunities of small-scale wind energy in Mumbai? Based on the observing and interviews with wind energy sites and companies, potential customers and other stakeholders, small-scale wind energy solutions would bring ease to some energy problems such as energy peak times in the main grid. Due to the low level of regulations, this kind of wind energy solutions would be quite easy to access. Harjula recommends direct sales of wind turbines and power purchase agreements as most appropriate marketing strategies. The best way to enter to the market seems to be a joint venture with an Indian company.

Rakhshanda Khan's (2009) study "**Market analysis of environmentally friendly cellulose insulation material in the construction business in Srinagar, India**" analyses the market for environmentally-friendly cellulose insulation material in Srinagar. Khan's study focuses on questions: What is the demand for cellulose insulation in Srinagar? How can cellulose insulation be sold in Srinagar? According the study there is a real need for this kind of insulation. Based on interviews with the structural engineers, construction companies, architects, government officials, printing agencies and retailers, Khan see tremendous potential for cellulose insulation business in Srinagar. According to her, the most important factors are the weather conditions, lack of competition and high environmental awareness among the government.

Yang Xun's (2010) study "**Evaluate business opportunity to invest large-scale e-waste processing facility in China**" introduces the market situation of e-waste business in China. Based on the market analysis (including analysis of business potentials and risks, entry modes, products and services, suppliers, distribution channels, and revenue models), Yang proposes a joint venture as the most suitable business model to help European investors to achieve a successful business of large scale e-waste processing facility in China.

Mervi Suni's (2010) study "**Renewable energy for base station and local economy in developing countries**" analyses business potential of telecommunication sector in rural villages in developing countries. The main research question was: What is the role of local economical and social development in rural villages in order to create sustainable business possibilities for telecommunication equipment and service provider in developing countries? The research objectives were to collect together the characteristics of local economic development and social growth in rural areas in developing countries and thus increase the understanding of the local economy concept from telecommunication equipment and service provider point of view, to analyse and compare the renewable energy solutions regarding how they create wealth to villagers and benefit the local economy, to define the potential long-term business opportunities for telecommunication equipment and service provider which are based on the usage of renewable energy sources and the development of local economy in rural areas, and to present

a business case for electricity production based on the technology chosen. As a result, Suni presents a model for a business coalition to enter to the markets.

All of these above shortly presented theses, as well as other Master's Thesis or this Master Programme, are published at Theseus. And some of them have already led to real business cases. As a result of the new curriculum, we will get more these kind of sustainability focused real business cases in the future.

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