

Greening Human Capital in China

Good morning! Ladies and Gentlemen:

First I would like to thank the organizer for giving me this opportunity to stand up here and share with you some stories from back in China. It is quite an honor for me as I believe this is more of an occasion for me to learn from every one of you in the audience. I guess one reason for my privilege here is my Chinese yellow face, as one of the very few among the audience; back home, I am just one in the other 1.5 billion. But if you look closer at my face, you will probably notice something slightly different: 'it is greener!'. Thanks to the exposure to the sustainability!

Green Imperative

The global financial crisis has sounded a warning bell of how the pursuit of short-term interest and lack of sense in sustainability will harm economic development. At the same time, the frequent snow crises, earthquakes, droughts and flooding in recent years are also testing the Chinese government and the Chinese people's ability to tackle the impending climate challenges. Three decades of formidable economic growth have transformed China into a colossal and resilient economy. Yet China's economic development has come at a significant environmental cost. In addition to climate, China must also develop new strategies to address energy crises, water scarcity, and challenges of global disease. It has become abundantly clear to the Chinese government that economic development needs to incorporate more aspects of sustainability.

Under this new pretext, China is embracing a new Green Imperative that requires governments, enterprises and individuals to work creatively and collaboratively for a new paradigm that brings harmony to the environment, society and economy.

Green Talent

In this new paradigm, People with sustainability mindsets or green expertise are the key to driving a new Profit driven model that is friendly and beneficial to our Planet. We identify this group of People as Green Talent, who will become increasingly desirable in the arriving green economy. Green Talent doesn't only refer to the particular individuals working in environmental areas, but professionals in general having the mindset of sustainability and the knowledge to green any specific industry that s/he is working within.

There is an apparent gap today in between the demand and supply side for Green Talents in China. A recent industry report issued by a leading China HR consultancy firm shows that talents in the sustainability field such as renewable energy, environmental services, low carbon building and manufacturing designs, are in great demand and would cost almost twice as much to hire compared with industry averages. On the other hand,

the Chinese education system lacks the content and capacity to produce qualified graduates able to meet this demand.

Green Career Program:

To promote education in sustainable development and meet the market demand, we have thus created the Green Career program to provide university students and young professionals with green knowledge through topic focused lectures, career development workshops, networking events, projects and internship/job opportunities.

Green Career aims to help youth and young professionals:

- ❖ Develop knowledge of sustainability and become part of the green market through meaningful engagements in employment or entrepreneurships.
- ❖ Gain the necessary skills to engage multiple sectors from government, companies and NGOs, and get connected to a network of other green youth leaders for unified efforts.
- ❖ Become passionate in making a difference in the world through new initiatives in environmental and societal sustainability.

So far we have organized a CSR/Sustainability Salon for professionals in cooperation with Inwent for over one year in Beijing. This Salon aims to provide professionals from across different sectors an opportunity to learn a wide of range of sustainability and CSR issues. This year, we have expanded the Salon to three major cities in China in partnership with a major Chinese Newspaper and aim to use media to further raise public awareness and understanding of sustainability issues.

Three of our colleagues are already teaching sustainability courses in Hongkong University, Hongkong Chinese University, and City University. We are currently also collaborating with a business school in Guangdong province (one of China's manufacturing centres) to design a Green MBA curriculum that places a strong emphasis on sustainability solutions for business in the local context. The newly developed Green MBA curriculum combines academic study and real-world experience in sustainability, as shared by academic and industry thought-leaders, which seeks to facilitate students' actions to look beyond sustainability/CSR theories and studies into local business solutions. We aim to cultivate future business leaders who not only talk about sustainability, but also have the know-how to integrate it into daily business operations. Moreover, by leveraging students' aptitudes as a whole, this curriculum also guides them through the practical challenges that the business world in Guangdong is facing,

and inspires them to think of and propose solutions that could potentially create an even wider social impact at the provincial level.

Youth Participation in a Greener World

Global youth make up about 30% of the world population, and their participation is fundamental for the transformation to a greener world. Youth in urban China are not fully aware of the sustainability challenges their country, and the World, face. They are used to living unsustainable lifestyles and are still developing their values. They are generally not used to thinking independently, thinking of solutions, or taking account of sustainability in their decision making or life decisions. Schools do not provide education covering topics of sustainable development; those that do generally focus on knowledge and a few topics, which have no long term impact on young people. While I was with Plan International, we had designed an ESD curriculum for Chinese High Schools by placing overseas English speaking university students as the trainers. The general method is to help increase students' knowledge of sustainable development, the ability to relate to the real world, help them form the right values and facilitate their actions. In executing the program, I found the youth in China are now becoming increasingly aware of sustainability issues and their individual power in making the choices. By changing them, they will change the world.

Resource Battle or Generation Battle?

Recently at the opening forum of a Low Carbon Research Centre at Peking University, there was an interesting discussion and it was mentioned that: 'since the total amount of existing oil, coals and natural gas on earth is a fixed amount, and we are going to use them all anyway, which means the total amount of world Carbon Dioxide emission will be a fixed number and it is just a matter of who has more and can discharge more. Thus one part of our country strategy should be to buy as much oil coal and gas from the outside as possible.'

The point is controversial but it partially reflects of the reality of world politics today in battling for resources and their rights to emit more. But the question is: are we still able to exist when we have turned all the energy resources on earth into carbon dioxide in the air? Rather than a resource battle, this is rather a generation battle. The younger generation fights for their right to live longer and healthier in the world with the generation in power. I am now only fighting with my parents but that I may soon be fighting against by my children.

From Pragmatism to Green Fashion

We are a practical nation and we value things practical **and down** to earth; in the rapid development phase, materialism could be the extreme as people begin to believe

anything that makes money makes sense. That was a primary challenge for sustainable development education a few years ago, as people didn't see much material value in it. We did need some different marketing strategies in the early stages

When we market the ESD program to high schools, the schools are usually more interested in the English course language rather than the Sustainable Development content, as our trainers are all English speakers from overseas. In marketing the ESD program to the university students, it is more beneficial to combine it with their career development. For young professionals, we are combining ESD with the green market potential and strong career growth. As for many entrepreneurs and investors, green or environmental investment is their primary interest.

The situation definitely has improved following Copenhagen, as everyone begins to talk about Low-Carbon; now there comes the World Expo, and everyone has started to think of green. The Expo has actually become a fantastic field for public sustainable development education, as almost all the pavilions I have visited have something to do with green and sustainability.

You might have seen the China pavilion photo before but you might not have had a chance to look at it from this angle. From here, you can see on top of the China pavilion, there are 27 thousand square meters of green gardens that help cool the inside temperature 5 to 10 Celsius degree.

Those are the Denmark, Germany, Sweden and Spanish pavilions, all of which have strong green components within the pavilions.

From Green Fashion to Value

I should say the green fashion has already come into formation during the on-going expo; but fashion doesn't last and to consolidate the ESD work in China, we need to go further down to the value. Substantial empirical and theoretical work demonstrates that values/life goals have important ramifications for people's behaviours (Feather, 1992). In particular, there is a positive correlation between intrinsic values and pro-environmental behaviour.

Looking at the picture of the Empirical Structure of Human Values; through research of The Underlying Values of Sustainability done by LEAD International, it is found that Universalism has quite a strong correlation with our green behaviours. It is also argued (WWF, 2009) that our feelings of connectedness with nature are positively correlated both with intrinsic values and green behaviour.

Looking back into Chinese history, universalism and connectedness with nature have been important aspects of Chinese traditional values and philosophy. Taoism focuses on

the harmony between people and nature, encouraging people to observe, study, and follow the laws of nature, rather than interrupting or going against them. Based on traditional Chinese values, contemporary Chinese philosophers also founded the Harmonology that promotes harmony between People and Nature, People and Society, as well as People and their Inner self. The ancient Chinese garden arose out of an attempt to imitate nature. In order to imitate nature, a Chinese garden designer scrupulously avoided all strict geometrical layouts that would recall man's ordering hand. The best design is to become part of nature, not to stand out from it.

This photo is from a 2500 year old town, in which we are partnering with the local university to set up a Sustainable Development Research Center. It is a very beautiful old town in China and now our partner university is open for applications for researchers/professors to assist in their Eco City & Eco Tourism research. The university will be able to provide one to three months living and accommodation expenses for the visiting researcher/professor. If any of you or your colleagues are interested, please email me.

From Traditional Value to National Pride

The Chinese phrase for crisis is a combination of the word danger and the word opportunity. By incorporating a fundamental sustainability value into its current massive manufacturing/production capacity, China stands in a unique position to speed up the global green transformation process through its 'Made-in-China' but green brand. Three decades of formidable economic growth have transformed China into a colossal economy with strong productivity; and I believe sustainability to be a great opportunity for China to become a major green manufacturing center. In the movie 2012, China had been chosen as the place to manufacture the massive lifeboats before the flooding. I believe China's productivity has something better to offer before that happens.

I am ending this presentation with a Panda photo taken by one of my friends, who was WWF's photographer and also passionate to use his art works to promote nature conservation and sustainability. Being one of the oldest animals in the world that lives only in China, the Panda could be a perfect symbol for sustainability in China. Thank you.