



ASIA SAVVY

NEW ZEALAND ASIA CONFERENCE 2017

Asia Sustainably

23 September 2017

The University of Auckland Business School



THE UNIVERSITY OF
AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tamaki Makaurau
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Asia Sustainably

New Zealand Asia Conference 2017

The theme of this year’s conference was “Asia Sustainably”. The intention of the conference was to open discussion on the role of countries, businesses and communities in protecting our environment for a sustainable future. As one of New Zealand’s leading tertiary institutions, we were proud to be able to host a forum where students could deliberate over this critical contemporary issue.

Additionally, our conference focused on raising awareness of the impact that countries in Asia have on the environment. We encouraged participants to consider how businesses and students can be part of the story, taking responsibility for protecting our world. For any ambitious graduate with aspirations to enter the global market, Asia is vital to consider in their vision. This is not just limited to those of Asian ethnicity in New Zealand. As the world becomes more multicultural, ethnicity is becoming an increasingly less relevant factor in determining one’s identity.

To be ‘Asia-savvy’ is to have the capability to view situations from a multi-cultural standpoint. The ability to be able to see the same situation with different cultural lenses allows us to bring fresh perspective to businesses. It allows us to become the mediators that can clear misunderstandings between different cultures. It allows us to become innovators that use the combined strengths of different cultures to our advantage. It also means that we are at times pioneers in areas of the world and business that are unsure how to respond to multicultural identities.

This year’s Asia Savvy conference aimed to equip an upcoming generation of leaders with mindfulness of the decisive importance of green thinking and sustainable policies.

Rosie Park
Asia Savvy Committee

Left: Preloved cups reduced waste at this year’s Asia Sustainably conference.

Asia Savvy summaries

Asia Sustainably



The 7th annual Asia Savvy conference was opened by **Natasha Hamilton-Hart**, Director of the New Zealand Asia Institute (NZAI), with a warm welcome to all the students from universities in Auckland, Palmerston North and Waikato along with speakers, sponsors and guests. She congratulated the student committee, led by Dinah Towle, on the conference's success in broadening the focus from "business" to "sustainability". She particularly applauded their efforts and enthusiasm for "walking the talk" through planting a Cape Reinga white rātā tree (*Metrosideros bartlettii*) next to the Business School as a symbol of our shared commitment to help preserve the environment and biodiversity. This tree is on the New Zealand Conservation Department's list of endangered tree species. Additionally, she acknowledged the positive step of making the 2017 Asia Savvy the first carbon-neutral conference at the University of Auckland. She wished the participants a

successful conference and encouraged them to stay involved with the Asia Savvy family.

On behalf of the 2017 Organising Committee, **Rosie Park**, a University of Auckland student majoring in Law and Japanese Studies, read out the committee members' personal pledges they had made towards leading a more sustainable life this year. She invited her fellow participants to join in the effort to mitigate the impact of the conference on the environment so as to make the Asia Savvy initiative more sustainable. She also urged them to follow the eco-friendly arrangements that the organising team had made for use of public transport, vegetarian catering, use of 'pre-loved cups and reduction in conference materials to reduce the conference's carbon footprint.

Complementing its sustainability theme, the 2017 Asia Savvy conference was fortunate to have its keynote address delivered by a world authority on the global green transition,



John Mathews, an Australian professor of global strategy from Macquarie University. He began by noting that unlike many other commentators on the environment in Asia, who typically focused on problems and challenges facing the region, he intended to help build an alternative narrative by sharing with the Asia Savvy participants a positive story of China as a driving force in the global green shift. Focusing his discussion on the emerging economic giant's energy and resources systems, he pointed out that in striving to incorporate itself into the global industrial world, China had embarked on the biggest industrialisation ever before witnessed. Yet while China managed to build a huge energy system to power its immense manufacturing system, it also became increasingly aware that it could not follow the traditional fossil fuel-intensive path to development, due to geopolitical limits, problems of resource security and

environmental damage. This “inconvenient truth” and growing public concerns about environmental risks to health forced the Chinese government to make a mid-course correction and find an alternative to its black (coal-driven) development model.

Quoting research data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), the World Bank, the China Electronics Corporation (CEC), and the Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF), Professor Mathews stated that China began to taper off new fossil fuel development around 2010 and 2011. By 2016, its electric power generated from water, wind and sun (WWS) had already reached 34 percent of its total. This, he suggested, was an astonishing rate of change for such a huge system with its vast existing fossil fuel infrastructure.



But why did China decide to invest more in hydro, wind and solar than nuclear power? Professor Mathews argued that the “emerging renewables superpower” made the choice for a simple and good reason: manufacturing production. In other words, China turned to renewable energies that could be manufactured through the production of renewable devices, such as hydro generators, wind turbines and solar panels. Switching from the conventional industrialisation model via fossil fuels to its well-tested path of manufacturing, China’s green shift was thus “green growth” all at once.

Besides energy, a second, related challenge facing China was its enormous hunger for resources. To maintain its growth trajectory, China had stretched its resource-quest tentacles to virtually every corner of the world. Yet China was acutely conscious of its vulnerability and sustainability concerns associated with its increasing dependence on global resources. As a solution to resource

supply uncertainty and risks, the Chinese government adopted policies to promote the “recirculation” of waste materials. With specific targets enacted for primary and secondary industries. The push for regenerating resources in circular flows was intended to transform China’s economy into a “circular economy” in which one manufacturer’s waste would become another’s inputs. The material-recirculation effort was further expanded to include consumers in projects such as urban mining of electronic wastes.

Professor Mathews went on to point out that to encourage and provide financial necessities for green-shift ventures, China moved quickly to become the world’s leading issuer of green bonds. First targeting institutional investors, US\$36 billion was raised across the country in 2016, amounting to 40 percent of the US\$81 billion issued globally in the same year. He concluded that a more sustainable capitalism was being developed in China.



Echoing the keynote speaker but focusing on local green endeavours, business commentator **Rod Oram** hailed New Zealand’s accomplishments in developing “flow energy” from wind and water and growing it into a commercially viable source of electricity. Yet he expressed regret that fossil fuels continued to play a role in powering NZ economic growth, and that their production continued to enjoy subsidies. He also lamented that TPPA (Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement) negotiations seemed to remain trapped in the business mentality and trading approach of the 20th century as there were few indications that green growth was a focus of the TPPA negotiations. Arguing against the notion that environmental issues were merely technical problems requiring technical solutions, Mr Oram emphasized a more philosophical issue underlying environmental debts and reforms: the relationship between humans and the ecological system. On that point, he commended the Asia Savvy participants for direct contribution to the

restoration of ecological balance by putting on a carbon-neutral conference.

From a psychological perspective, **Niki Harré**, Associate Dean for Sustainability in the Faculty of Science, elaborated on why individuals could and would likely want to engage in environmentally friendly behaviours. Dr Harré attributed this significant potential to three basic qualities of average people, namely, they “are happiness seekers”, “social” and “want to be good”. Drawing on psychological research findings, she further explained how positive emotions encourage creativity and cooperation in originating useful collective and individual products. Hence, it might be more effective to “do sustainability in a positive atmosphere”, or “associate it with fun and pleasure” than constantly “talk about problems”. Dr Harré then specified that being “social” meant that humans were natural-born imitators. She advised environmentalists to “do the behaviour” that they were advocating.



“leave behavioural traces” for people to copy, “emphasise” advocated behaviours as being normal, “tell tales of joy”, and “produce images” of sustainable community living. Finally, since people in general “want to be good”, it is helpful to frame environmental issues in moral terms related to justice and fairness, to articulate positive suggestions on what people could do to help save the earth and improve community wellbeing.

The concept of positivity in encouraging eco-friendly behaviours was indeed exemplified by the other invited speakers and their stories.

Derek Yu and **Hamish McCarroll** detailed how Ecostore became a leading sustainable brand in both New Zealand and Asia through its “safer for you and our world” products and “imagine the future and do it now” message. **Chye Heng** illustrated how “employee ownership” granted all those working in Beca a sense of stewardship and inspired them to help the giant professional consultancy operate sustainably within and promote “green business” without.

Victor Li demonstrated through his personal experience that one did not need to be an environmentalist to stay engaged with the environment, and that being green was not a trade-off but an added value. He was the CEO of Ivy+ Education and UHSAS. Yet he was also the initiator of the NZ Environmental Entrepreneurship Competition for school students, and an active supporter of the Make a Difference Youth Sustainability Programme (MAD) run by the Auckland Council. **Kitty Lin** shared her transitional journey from a corporate lawyer to the owner of the Green Time Restaurant in Auckland. While she had always been environmental conscious, the turning point came at a climate change conference in 2015, where she “was hit” by the discussions on not only the serious problems facing the Earth, but also what “each of us” could do to alleviate them. Thus she opened her restaurant and developed sustainable guidelines and practices for all its operation links. **Sophie Hudson** from Auckland Council Sustainability Team’s Live Lightly programme spelled out



what she and her colleagues were striving to achieve. With Auckland planning to reduce the city’s carbon footprint by 40% by 2040, the Live Lightly programme embarked on a three-year campaign aimed at “giving every Aucklander, family, community, and business doable actions they can choose and act on now.” The action choices would cover “move”, “eat”, “energy”, “shop”, “grow”, and “share”. She invited all the Asia Savvy participants to join her in “making a difference today”.

Natasha Hamilton-Hart concluded the conference with the message she drew from the presentations: no one is too small to contribute to the global green shift; but working together we may reach the goal faster.

Student discussions and recommendations

Workshop 1: Our village

Groups were invited to agree on '10 rules for a sustainable future for your village'. Once these rules were identified, they were asked to select the five most critical without amending their earlier goals.

All groups identified varying rules falling into the following four categories:

- Public and non-polluting transportation
- Renewable energy and energy efficiency
- Recycling and waste reduction
- Sourcing locally grown food





Workshop 2: A day in my world

Compare your daily life with your peers. Go through it methodically to assess where waste is and how it can be managed. What positive things are you doing and what positive changes could you make?

Examples of current sustainable practices were as follows:

Around the home:

- If plastic bags are used, save them to use again
- Eat more vegetarian or vegan foods
- Make sure taps aren't dripping at home
- Switch to energy-saver appliances
- Turn machines off rather than leaving on standby

- Open windows instead of using air conditioning
- Use blankets and warmer clothes instead of heaters
- Start a vegetable garden
- Begin composting
- Drink soy milk instead of cow's milk
- Take lunch in containers instead of cling film
- Use up left-overs
- Turn lights off in rooms

Outside the home:

- Use tote bags when shopping instead of plastic bags
- Know what recycling numbers mean
- Use public transport wherever possible
- Buy second-hand



ASIA SAVVY
2015 EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY 2015

Maryam Bukhari
University of Auckland



Student essays

Participants in the annual Asia Savvy conference are required to complete a 300 word opinion piece on selected topics relevant to the theme.

This year's topics were:

- Companies will need to become greener to sustain a competitive advantage
- Everyone can contribute to growing more sustainable communities
- Tertiary institutions should take responsibility for fostering green thinking

The prize for this year's best essay was an electric bike generously sponsored by Velocity Electric Bikes. The winner of the bike was Rachel Weng, a student at the University of Auckland. Runner-up prizes were awarded to Karina Sum and Cailey Dayu.

Their essays are included overleaf along with a selection of good essays from other participants.

Below: Rachel Weng, winner of the Asia Savvy Best Essay Competition with her electric bike.



Student essays

Companies will need to become greener to sustain a competitive advantage.

Jaffar Bui Al-Shammery, the University of Auckland

Globalisation has been transforming the business process over the past few decades. Many firms have responded with high-level planning to adapt to changing market environments these firms are the ones that are continuously doing well today, as they were in the past. Despite this, the extent of change in the market environment is critically underestimated. An informed consumer base and saturated markets of innovative products have created a new customer segment, the mindful consumer. Essentially, these consumers are looking for connection, something that is genuine and exists beyond themselves.

The evidence shows exponential increase in mindful consumers over the past few years. This is a signal to companies in that they need to realign their strategic direction with the values of these mindful consumers. One of the many ways a company can satisfy this requirement, is by becoming green through initiatives that creates positive impact on society which, in some form, balances the negative third-party spill over costs of operation. As mentioned

earlier, flexible firms have already recognised the importance of becoming green to sustain competitive advantages. The issue this written piece attempts to bright to light, is that the green effect is hugely underestimated. Three to five years from now, being green would no longer be a competitive advantage, rather it would become a competitive necessity. Companies would need to become green, at the very least, to stay competitive in the market.

The focus is now on key Asian traders and economies. China for example has been dominating the scoreboard for its leadership in productivity and output. To retain its position as a global economic power, its businesses, both major and small-to-medium, need to prepare themselves for a large-scale change in focus and look towards not just fostering, but embodying green values to connect with this growing customer segment.

Everyone can contribute to growing more sustainable communities.

Debora Cheng, the University of Auckland

Everyone can contribute to sustainability, regardless of gender, status, or income. Contribution to environmental sustainability means making responsible decisions and actions in a conscious effort to reduce the amount of negative impact on the natural world, for the ultimate goal of protecting and preserving nature's ability and resources to support human life. It is a big topic of discussion globally and although the ultimate effects of human impact on the environment are disputed, there is undoubtedly a high enough risk that action should be taken immediately. At a household level, it's possible to do things like reducing waste, growing your own vegetables, turning off lights when they're not in use, recycling, using public transport or carpooling, using energy efficient appliances, or more. Everyone generates waste daily, but this can be reduced by reusing containers, not getting a plastic bag at the supermarket, making your own compost, or buying in bulk to reduce plastic packaging waste. For those who own businesses, there also many ways to encourage sustainability in customers, and having a more sustainable way of producing goods. Many businesses now involve themselves

in developing and using technology and manufacturing processes that produce less waste and use less energy than traditional methods, or make up for the damage they do by planting trees and forests and contributing to environment causes; as well as having a positive effect on the environment, this helps to build up an environmentally friendly image which attracts and also influences their consumers. Some also use recycled materials in their products or packaging, or have ingredients sourced from sustainable farms and forests. Many supermarkets and shops also charge an extra cost for plastic bags as an incentive to use reusable eco bags. There have been many changes to the way people have viewed sustainability in the past decade and I believe that it will continue to change in a positive direction.

Everyone can contribute to growing more sustainable communities.

Cailey Dayu, the University of Auckland

It is a fallacy that has been perpetuated for decades those who have the capacity to create change are only limited to those in positions of power. Think Ban Ki-moon, or Martin Luther King Jr. In reality, however, every single individual - irrespective of age, gender, colour, or creed - can contribute to change.

Whilst such a notion seems absurd, the current environmental issues today and the appalling milestones humanity has reached in degrading ecosystems are due to a single choice. A single choice, repeated a thousand-fold. As consumers, we often think very little how the food we purchase have reached our hands, or how we have access to energy that enable us to take hot showers and drive our cars. There has become such a detachment between the goods and services we purchase and the production process.

The average New Zealander, in fact, has a carbon footprint of 17.7 tonnes per year. It is an embarrassingly high value for a developed country, let alone one that promotes itself as "clean and green". Intuitively, if single choices resulted in such a poor outcome, then it will

be single choices that will pave the way to a positive change.

If every single person in New Zealand chose to reduce their intake of meat, there will be fewer methane emissions from cattle. If every single person in New Zealand chose to walk or cycle to nearby destinations, less CO₂ will be released. If every single person in New Zealand chose to be mindful of the waste they produce and its disposal, there will be less general waste deposited to our landfills.

While these are just a few personal decisions we can take, the potential it holds is substantial. Every person can enhance the natural environment and foster green communities, but need to be given a compelling reason as to why they should.

As renowned explorer Jacques Cousteau observed, "People protect what they love." We need this love for our natural environment in the hearts of New Zealanders - and in countries beyond.

Everyone can contribute to growing more sustainable communities.

Francis Noel Flores, the University of Auckland

A community can be viewed as a collective. Not just of people, but of things that are related and connected. What creates a community is a common goal, a shared belief or a specific location. A sustainable community thrives on the interdependency of others around them and working together to meet a common goal. There is kinship found in the idea of a community. Whether this is to clean up the local river or to invest in something long term that will benefit generations to come.

Sustainability is pillared on the foundation of creating something for the long-term with what we have today and it is an elementary principle that we should all work together in keeping the world sustainable in long-run. Only in the recent decades, we have seen how the actions of a few can affect the health of a community, its environment and the life within it. The issues of global warming are more alarming than before, seeing communities being shattered by the adverse changes in weather and if everyone contributed slightly to changing a little bit of

their own life, communities all over the world could be changed for the better.

Organisations such as the UN, have developed the Sustainable Development Goals which strive for a more sustainable world over the next decades; these are topical issues which every individual believing for a sustainable future can work towards. The beauty of these goals, are the simple targets and steps that people in and around are community can follow to help create a sustainable future.

It only takes a short look around your environment to find something that could grow and be fostered into something sustainable in the long run, if we all looked for that one thing, we really could change the world and our communities.

Companies will need to become greener to sustain a competitive advantage.

Jae Jun Kim, the University of Auckland

Does going green really give companies a competitive advantage? I venture that the answer to this question is non-binary. It is not a simple yes or no question.

Corporate environmentalism is often framed as an inherent trade-off (Porter et al., 1995). On the one hand, there are the social benefits of strict environmental standards. On the other hand, there are the high costs of maintaining environmental standards. Porter suggests that innovative environmental standards can increase resource productivity, lower costs and create shareholder value. Pollution indicates inefficiency; it shows the incomplete use of resources. Thus, companies should aim to create an innovative closed-loop system where waste products are reused.

However, a case study in the United States shows limited market incentive for companies “going green” (Jacobs et al., 2010). The study concluded that environmental initiatives did not result in greater shareholder value. In fact, in some cases, there was a negative impact. So, why the discord in theory and practice?

The problem is that win-win situations, as envisaged by Porter, is anecdotal and rare (Walley et al., 1994). Therefore, the aim of businesses should not be to create value

through environmental innovation, but to mitigate destruction of shareholder value. Walley argues that companies cannot ignore environmental issues such as resource sustainability. Rather, the issue is what approach to take.

The playing-field is already set. Corporate environmentalism is unavoidable. Companies must adapt to survive. But “going green” will not automatically give companies a competitive advantage. The marketplace is not so simple. The issue is how the company will sustain itself on this new playing field.

References:

Green and Competitive: Ending the Stalemate (Porter et al., 1995).

An empirical investigation of environmental performance and the market value of the firm (Jacobs et al., 2010).

It's not easy being green (Walley et al., 1994).

Tertiary institutions should take responsibility for fostering green thinking.

Jenny Nguyen, Auckland University of Technology

Green thinking is being aware of our interconnectedness with the world and our impacts on nature with our daily activities (Go Green, n.d.). Everyone should have an active role in green thinking, particularly, tertiary institutions should take special responsibility for fostering green thinking.

Firstly, because tertiary institutions are think tanks of every country, they play a significant role in environmental researches and thus creating green innovations. When tertiary institutions put more effort in fostering green thinking, more funds will be invested in environmental field and more green initiatives by lecturers, researchers and students will come to reality. These may bring a lot of positive impacts on society later on.

Secondly, students are the main future skilled workforce which shapes the future of a country in terms of culture, economics and politics. In other words, their thinking and their acts will play a significant impact on social trends, national environmental perspectives and economic status. If green thinking is embedded in their perceptions, they will be aware of environmental effects of every single act in their social life and economic activities. This will lead to a greener society with sustainable economics and sustainable environment.

Finally, tertiary institutions are the main

education platforms of every country. Consequently, they drive the awareness of not only students but people generally. If they foster green thinking and pay more attention to green acts, more people will be persuaded to follow. By that way, a positive social move will be made.

With such an important role in fostering green thinking, how can tertiary institutions really create that impact? The most influential way is integrating green thinking topic into academic programmes as a compulsory part of the subject so that both students and professors will engage more in environmental discussions and be more conscious of acting “greenly”. Secondly, tertiary institutions may organise environmental campaigns, workshops and academic conferences about sustainable environment to raise people’s awareness of environment. Last but not least, they can foster green innovations among lecturers and students by organising regular competitions within university, region or nationwide.

References:

Go Green. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.go-green.ae/thinkgreen.php

Companies will need to become greener to sustain a competitive advantage.

Jiemin Peng, the University of Auckland

Sustaining competitive advantage is the struggle of many companies in the modern day society. To establish competitive advantage, business corporations must understand and incorporate sustainability into their core values. At the heart of sustainability is making the environment “greener”. Almost all companies are driven by their mission for profit. However, what they overlook is that the foundation to achieve their goals is through practising corporate social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility is a recent phenomenon. Although it is an ideal principle that has been taught in universities and text books, it is a practice that many companies lack. On a positive note, business leaders have started recognising the connection and interdependence the two grounds hold. The relationship between the two corporations allows for opportunities for sustainable growth whether it be profitable growth or societal growth. What companies need to understand is that opportunities are contingent upon a greener environment. This should be done so with the cooperative efforts of all organisations.

A prominent example of this is the birth of social enterprises. Social enterprises are becoming increasingly popular. Their profitability, revenue, brand reputation and sales are all increasing at a high and consistent rate. However, what distinguishes them is their values they try to deliver to their customers in which it increases customer satisfaction. In our modern day society, customers are more knowledgeable and aware of what and why they choose a product or service. They are left with high decision making powers and this leaves companies at a relatively vulnerable position. This could be turned into an opportunity through transforming and matching your company’s values in line with the customers’ values environmental sustainability: as majority of the people would care about their day to day environment and what environment their future generation is going to grow up in. Competitive advantage is not achieved only through innovation, research and design, but most importantly their values and practice in becoming greener.

Everyone can contribute to growing more sustainable communities.

Karina Sum, the University of Auckland

Change begins with you. A clean green community starts by recognising the power of individual responsibility. Small steps made by everyone has a large collective difference. There is a preconceived notion that governmental bodies and corporate institutions are responsible for adopting strategies that reduce carbon emissions and promote a green New Zealand. While this is true, it is important not to underestimate the power of a single action. Reducing the use of private vehicles in favour of public transport is making a statement. Bringing reusable bags to the supermarket is making a statement. Saying no to disposable plastics is making a statement. If everyone did that, just imagine how drastically litter would decrease.

There are benefits to a green community. Growing a green community is not only beneficial for health, but it is also economical. Starting a vegetable patch and composting food waste can be excellent pastime activities that leads to fresher produce whilst minimising waste. Opting to cycle or walk, reduces the individual carbon footprint as well as reducing expenditure. Creating green communities can provide an excellent opportunity to socialise with others. Creating a communal garden,

building an eco-friendly attraction space, and reducing waste are tasks that can be achieved by people that have a similar desire to care for the environment.

From the words of Van Gogh, “Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.” A single action has a rippling effect. One small step in building a green community can go a long way. Just as planting a single seed can grow into a tall tree that provides oxygen. A sustainable environment for future generations can be created if everyone makes a conscious effort, regardless of age. Whether it is big or small, everyone can go out there and make a difference.

Companies will need to become greener to sustain a competitive advantage.

Rachel Weng, the University of Auckland

Green business could bring both tangible and intangible benefits. The most direct positive impact is cost reduction. Many green business practices have proven success in reducing cost through innovative operations. For example, Catalyst Paper Corporation cut down operating cost by using its own by-products (biomass) to generate power. This has effectively reduced greenhouse gas emission by 70 percent and its energy use by 21 percent since 1990 (IBM, 2008). Many indirect benefits are gained through positive company image. According to a survey (Jenkin, 2015), 62% of the millennials want to work for a company that makes positive impacts on society. Smart and young professionals feel motivated to work for companies with good reputation. Also, it is evident that green businesses will have easier capital access, as more stock exchanges require sustainability information and Bloomberg already includes sustainability information as an investing index. Furthermore, early adoption of sustainability practices will push companies to seek innovative green solutions without sacrificing profit margins, which can also prepare themselves for stricter legal responsibility. The earlier the companies incorporate sustainability strategy, the more likely they will be able to gain the first mover advantage. Eventually, companies can leap from being passively compliant to laws and

regulations to taking the lead in industries. The invention of internet and mobile have significantly improved the information transparency. Meanwhile, consumers are also demanding more information about the products. With increasing income and environmental awareness, sustainability will become a factor that determines customers' buying decisions. Nutrition table already appears on every package, and the energy consumption table is highly likely to be required on future packaging. This will also urge companies to choose sustainable suppliers. The call for greener future is a risk but also an opportunity. Companies must incorporate sustainability into their overall strategy to stay in the game, and develop it into a new competitive advantage.

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Tertiary institutions should take responsibility for fostering green thinking.

Aaron Zhong, the University of Auckland

Tertiary institutions should NOT take responsibility for fostering green thinking.

The age at which people commence higher education is too late to begin “fostering green thinking”. Every person that steps through the door of a tertiary institute (and those who do not for whatever reason) should be educated about the environment’s woes and ingrained to think green and green only. As adults, we are more hard-headed and resistant to change but kids will find drawing a poster about the importance of recycling more fun than anything and it’s likely that having recycled for 15 years of their life, they will continue to do so into adulthood. I imagine a world where nursery rhymes rhyme “twinkle, twinkle little star” with “buy an electric car” in hopes to promote green thinking.

Statistics in 2015 show that a mere 9.8% of people age 15 and over participated in tertiary education (www.educationcounts.govt.nz), so targeting students in tertiary institutions is only a small percentage of the population, too small to really make a significant impact and therefore is relatively ineffective. I believe if we are educated on thinking sustainably as young as possible through institutes where a higher number of the population go through such as kindergarten, primary school, intermediate

school and high school, an appreciably larger percentage of the population will be involved in the movement.

To summarise, tertiary institutions should not be responsible for fostering green thinking because not enough people go through a tertiary institution and when they do it is so late in life that engraving green thinking will be harder so start fostering green thinking early and leave tertiary institutes to teach skills that will empower students to spread their green thinking through environmentally-friendly businesses.

The New Zealand Asia Institute (NZAI)

The New Zealand Asia Institute (NZAI) was established in May 1995 as part of The University of Auckland’s strategic plan for internationalisation. The decision to set up the Institute was a response to the growing importance of Asia to New Zealand politically, economically and culturally. It signified an evolving recognition of the need for an organisation able to reach across academic boundaries within the University and relate this national resource to policy-making and the wider community in New Zealand.

As a university-wide initiative, NZAI has core objectives including:

- Strengthening interdisciplinary and inter-faculty cooperation in order to ensure interested students in all academic fields have access to Asia-related courses
- Maximising the University’s location in New Zealand’s largest city with its many commercial links to Asia
- Brokering the University’s Asian expertise in policy advice and case-study analyses to Government departments and the private sector
- Building a core of specialists on New Zealand-Asia issues and to provide a forum for informed and forward-looking discussions on what is happening in Asia and its implications for New Zealand
- Involving the increasing Asian population both in the University and the city.

NZAI’s current positioning in the Business School was of strategic importance as it added to the Institute’s policy focus with a complementary applied business dimension. It also allowed NZAI to enrich and enhance its research portfolio with more programmatic projects, which will better engage targeted groups in the public. As a result, the Institute is better enabled to serve as a focal point for the development of multidisciplinary activities that will involve research teams and postgraduate students.

Continuing the support for Asia-Savvy fits with NZAI’s overall mission to “develop graduates, knowledge and ideas that enhance New Zealand’s understanding of, and ability to engage productively with, Asia.” Through bringing together and engaging increased numbers of Asia-savvy students, businesses and other leaders with interests in Asia in this student-led conference, NZAI is helped to create and sustain a platform for engagement with Asia.



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We acknowledge the generous support of our sponsors for this year's conference:

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