

THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: REFLECTIONS AND SOLUTIONS FROM MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

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This special issue brings a rich diversity of views on how institutions of higher education can contribute to meet the targets put forward by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals represent ambitious challenges to end all forms of poverty, tackle climate change while promoting economic prosperity and inclusion by the end of the year 2030 (United Nations, 2015).

We received over 50 manuscript submissions and were faced with the difficult challenge to select only eight to be published. I would like to profusely thank the guest editors for promoting RAEP, reviewing the manuscript, and providing insightful comments to the authors: Cristiane Benetti, Ph.D. (ICN Business School, France), (ICN Business School, France), Eric Talavera Campbell, MRe (Education Quality Accreditation Agency-EQUAA, Peru), and Friedemann Schulze-Fielitz, M.A. (EFMD GN Americas, United States). I am grateful to the editorial team for organizing the selection process and making sure that we follow the tight schedule. Finally, I am incredibly thankful to Edson Sadao, Ph.D. for the opportunity and honor to lead this edition. Your guidance, commitment, and excitement are very inspiring.

In the next sections, I summarize and divide the contributions of the selected articles into three categories: pedagogical approaches of teaching sustainability, assessment of sustainability learning, and sustainability curriculum.

## **PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES TO TEACHING SUSTAINABILITY**

Various authors expanded on current research on pedagogical tools to teaching sustainability (Brundiers, Wiek & Redman, 2010; MacVaugh & Norton, 2012; Sherman, & Burns, 2015) by offering creative approaches on how to respond to local demands and by offering a theoretical framework to facilitate choice of pedagogical instruction. Dinara Leslye Macedo Calazans, Washington José de Souza, Nila Patrícia Freire Pequeno, Fábio Resende Araújo, and Valdi Lima Júnior reflected on the value of service-learning in partnership with a native community near the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN). The authors concluded that the project fostered a strong relationship between the university and the community while advancing inter-disciplinary learning for both faculty and students.

Elsi do Rocio Cardoso Alano, Maria Tereza Saraiva de Souza, and José Mauro da Costa Hernandez investigated how different technologies and methodologies affect students' learning. The authors employed current management theories (Theory of Planned Behavior, Theory of Diffusion Innovation, Theory of Acceptance Model, and Decomposed Theory of Planned Behavior) to propose a framework to help in the selection of adequate pedagogies to teach sustainability.

This special issue also included a case study to be used in class discussions. Maria Audenora Rufino, Polyandra Zampiere Pessoa Silva, and Wenner Glaúcio Lopes Lucena reported on Samarco's loss of societal legitimacy following the dam breakage in Mariana, MG. The accident represented a major environmental, social, and economic disaster, and this case study is even more relevant in the context of similar tragedies in recent years. The authors collected evidence from news media to assess Samarco's legitimacy before, during, and after the disaster. Results from the study emphasized the importance and value of legitimacy to maintain organizational activities.

## **ASSESSMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY LEARNING**

We applaud the authors' efforts to assess sustainability learning as sustainability is a rather difficult topic to evaluate given its multi-disciplinary and complex nature (Kanashiro & Starik, 2013; Tuinstra, Jagger, & Weaver, 2008). We encourage other faculty members to adopt similar assessment tools to periodically revise their pedagogical approaches in the classroom.

Norman de Paula Arruda Filho, Marcia Regina Marteloza Cassitas Hino, and Barbara S. Przybylowicz Beuter investigated sustainability learning in the executive training program offered by the ISAE Brazilian Business School. Students answered a questionnaire to evaluate their level of sustainability awareness before and after the course. The survey outcomes suggested significant improvement in learning and greater engagement of students with the principles of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Nathalia Rigui Trindade, Marcelo Trevisan, Erica Santini de Lima, and Rodrigo Reis Favarin assessed the effectiveness of experiential learning method in learning sustainability values. The authors conducted interviews with faculty and collected secondary data from documents. Results showed that, through experiential learning, students acquired a system thinking, critical analysis, and understood the importance of co-participation. Experiential learning is essential to make problems more tangible and visible, particularly in the context of sustainability as it relates to values of ethics, justice, compassion, and equality.

## **SUSTAINABILITY CURRICULUM**

Several authors have built on existing literature on sustainability in management education (Figueiró & Raufflet, 2015; SetóPamies & Papaoikonomou, 2016; Rusinko, 2010) and examined how to infuse sustainability education in the curriculum and throughout the organization. Paola Schmitt Figueiró, Guilherme Frozza Felix da Silva, and Ariana Raquel Philereno conducted a case study analysis of a private institution in higher education to investigate how sustainability is embedded in the curriculum. Based on interviews and content analysis of documents, the authors concluded that sustainability was present in a few courses and was covered only superficially. The study suggests that contextual pressures may influence changes in the curriculum so that students can acquire critical and reflective knowledge of sustainability.

Monica Aparecida de Sordi Martao and Jacques Demajorovic examined how corporate universities promote education for sustainability among its employees and external stakeholders. Findings from interviews with corporate university managers revealed that, even though sustainability appeared to be part of the strategy discourse, there was no or little educational training in sustainability. The authors concluded that one of the barriers might be the fact that sustainability is often confined to one specific department in the organizations.

Lastly, Luciana Cabral Farias, Ana Lúcia de Araújo Lima Coelho, and Christiano Coelho suggested five ways to integrate sustainability in management education. Based on their review, the suggestions are 1) course specialized in sustainability; 2) sustainability as an interdisciplinary topic; 3) hands-on practices aligned with theories; 4) incentive for research in sustainability; and 5) institutional campaigns supporting sustainability awareness.

This collection of articles presents evidence of increasing engagement and interest of institutions of higher education in sustainable development. In summary, the contribution of the selected work is relevant as authors presented innovative and effective pedagogical approaches to teaching sustainability, provided insights on how to conduct assessment of sustainability learning in different types of program settings, and suggested various roadmaps on how to initiate and integrate sustainability curriculum.

However, we know that much more is needed if institutions are committed to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. We hope this special issue is encouraging, provocative, and inspiring and we invite you to continue the conversation on how our teaching, service, and research can contribute to advance environmental, social, and economic well-being for the current and the next generations.

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