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Paper Information

Title: Integrating Sustainability into Management Education: A Status Report
Track: 2-5
Keywords: sustainability, business schools, curriculum design, MBA education, best practices in management education
Abstract
Integrating Sustainability into Management Education: A Status Report
by Nancy McGaw and Mary Gentile
Paper Objectives:

To explore business school initiatives (courses, research and extracurricular activities), especially at the master’s level, which build the capacity of graduates to:

- recognize the “tremendous power of the private sector and business activity to harness resources to create sustainable goods and services that are valued locally and globally;” and

- understand the types of business practices that “promote sustainable development and consumption patterns to alleviate poverty and increase the quality of life for all people.”

Content summary:

- Document, using data collected through the Beyond Grey Pinstripes global survey of leading MBA programs, the prevalence in business schools of capacity building efforts - including required and elective courses, research and teaching centers, and experiential learning programs.

- Identify best practice examples (e.g. exemplary courses or influential research centers)

- Report on interviews with 6-8 faculty or administrators at business schools who teach best practice courses or administer best practice programs.

Background

Business schools wield tremendous influence on the skills and attitudes emerging leaders bring to the workforce – over 100,000 master’s degree are awarded each year, for example. For two decades, business school training and the MBA programs in particular have been designed around a business model that emphasizes maximization of shareholder value as the primary indicator of business success. But the paradigm is shifting and important initiatives are underway that explore how business leaders can serve shareholders AND other stakeholders of the firm simultaneously.

In order to meet the complex challenges this balancing act presents, business executives will have to acquire new skills and perspectives. The best business schools are adapting to the new reality and offering students training which provides a broader understanding of the role of the firm, its context and the measures of its success.
Using data collected in the Beyond Grey Pinstripes data, the authors will review various ways leading business schools are integrating concepts related to sustainable development into the business school experience at the Master’s level.

Part I – We will review the data from several perspectives. For example, we will select one discipline – e.g operations management – and provide an overview of how ideas related to sustainable development are being raised in operations management courses and which schools are including this content. We will also select one particular topic – such as poverty, for example – and see where this subject is being addressed in MBA programs. We could also identify the courses that are specifically being taught on the subject of sustainability and document the range of topics covered in these courses.

Part II – will introduce examples of best practices in each of the specific areas selected for special focus.

Part III – will summarize interviews with a limited number of faculty and administrators designed to learn:

• Why this course/program was created?
• What challenges were overcome as it took shape?
• What resources were necessary to make it happen?
• How has it altered student/faculty thinking?
• What are schools’ measures of impact? Success?
• What challenges lie ahead?

From this broad review of educational offerings as well as this in-depth look at a specific discipline and topic, we will draw some learnings about the critical paths to success in integrating sustainability into MBA education.

If you have any questions, please contact us at http://opim.wharton.upenn.edu/gc/?sec=1&page=conference/contact.

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