

"Equipped for responsibility in light of uncertainty and complexity? Studies of business education for sustainability"

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Abstract

Calls for the inclusion of 'sustainable development' in the business curriculum have increased in the wake of financial crisis and increased concern about climate change. As a result, new initiatives are emerging and new teaching approaches are being developed. At the same time, the integration of sustainability in the business curriculum has been described as particularly challenging, which relates to assumptions underpinning mainstream business theories and different views about how business education should deal with values. In addition, sustainability issues are often complex and uncertain, which implies severe challenges for predominant responsibility regimes. With this background, I here draw on a typology of responsibility (Pellizzoni, 2004) to analyse results from four previous empirical studies of business education, and suggest how business students could become better equipped to address uncertain and complex sustainability issues. The results from the empirical studies, in the form of three categories of business roles articulated in educational practice, are based on analysis of textbooks, teacher interviews and classroom observations. The studies were conducted shortly after 'sustainable development' was included in the curriculum at upper secondary level in Sweden. It is argued that students could become unequipped, ill-equipped or better equipped to address uncertain and complex sustainability issues, depending on the way in which 'sustainable development' is incorporated in business education. It is therefore suggested that the three categories of business roles (adapting, adding or creating), could be useful to analyse and assess initiatives of incorporating 'sustainable development' in business education. The categories could also be used to initiate discussions with students about the role of business, and/or in assignments involving for instance analysis of annual reports.

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Pernilla Andersson is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Education at Stockholm University. Her research interests involve methodological approaches to educational research and environment and sustainability education, specifically in the context of economics education.

Date	Wednesday 7 March 2018
Time	13:30 – 16:00
Venue	Room 1.1, Sint-Pietersplein 7, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Ghent University.
Registration	Please register by 5 March at https://doodle.com/poll/v348c3s6hbzas98d .
