

The Changing Business Case of Learning in Today's Time

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Business leaders across the world are looking for hires who have a working knowledge of sustainability. They want professionals who can make sustainable decisions that stand the test of time.

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Sustainability is at the core of the development processes in human society, social, economic, and environmental for perpetual improvement and change. It is slowly becoming a mainstay of courses in

universities around the world. An increasing number of graduates are looking for careers where they can make an environmental and societal impact, do something for conservation of environment, or even be involved in CSR activities in a small way. There are more aspiring sustainability officers than there are jobs, even though it is a new field. The matter of the fact is that sustainability is not going to remain ensiled for a lot longer. Addressing aspects of environmentalism alone is not enough to equip managers with the skill they need to address the formidable social, economic, and environmental challenges that we face. As companies start to embrace environmental, social and governance programmes and strategies and try to integrate them with their business, they will need chemical engineers who understand the objectives and processes of the company, investor relations officers who can talk about ESG strategies, and logistics specialists who can think in terms of stakeholders and the long-term benefits.

Business leaders across the world are looking for hires who have a working knowledge of sustainability. They want professionals who can make sustainable decisions that stand the test of time. They are critical to change the business mindset to long-term thinking. Sustainability officers are change-makers, and they must figure out how to incorporate forward-thinking policies across the corporation. We are all moving towards that direction, and the faster we adapt, the better.

The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 are the blueprint for achieving an improved and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. To end poverty, countries must address a range of social needs, including education and health.

Dialogue for change

The UN Global Compact, an arm of the United Nations, which rallies corporations to align their business strategies and operations with principles on labour, human rights, anti-corruption, and environment, created a community for business schools called the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). They try to tackle a crucial problem: business school curricula focus on maximizing shareholders' value, with societal issues and ethics relegated to the sides. PRME opened up a dialogue and created working groups to outline what business schools should be teaching and how they can integrate sustainability across curricula. Companies should also get more involved with business schools and teach students skills useful in building and running sustainable companies, which will be the norm in the future. Numeracy and literacy will not be the only generalized skills that will be required in the future. Entrepreneurship and business, with a sustainable approach, will be the norm.

What do students want and how can we deliver?

Students are also starting to focus on sustainability. For instance, Net Impact, which started as a small campus club, is now an association with more than 50,000 students and professionals in over 300 chapters. All of them are committed to making a real difference to the environment through their careers. Surveys have revealed that innovations focus on experiential learning and impact-oriented curricula to meet the increasing demand. Students are not satisfied with the level of sustainability interaction in their management programmes. They feel that focusing on environmental and social issues is essential for the long-term success of a business. Most of them believe that learning about these issues is a priority, and an increasing number of them felt that their schools could do a better job of integrating environmental and social themes in the curricula.



Business schools and corporate leaders should actively exchange ideas. Companies should welcome students to do projects or research for them as case studies, and academia should welcome the interplay with working businesses. This will also give students a chance to test their ideas in a working environment and help them identify ideas and strategies that can be implemented to build a sustainable future. The day is not far when every job in the world will be a sustainability job. It is incumbent on higher learning institutes to incorporate it into their academic model so that students are better prepared for the road ahead.

The author, Dr S D Gupta, is Chairman of IIMR University.