

INTRODUCTION

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The structure and purpose of this book

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Sustainability issues are relevant to all organisations of all sizes and in all sectors. Increasingly, organisations themselves are demanding sustainability literacy skills for a wide range of roles and responsibilities. If learners can gain these skills they are therefore improving both their own employability as well as their ability to contribute to making their future workplace and society more sustainable. Yet despite this, and an ever-growing emphasis on employability within the education sector, there are currently few examples of sustainability literacy being addressed across the curriculum in mainstream education.

Robinson 2009: 130

This book is written for undergraduates who are studying for a business or management degree and want to know the part played by **sustainability in the subjects they are studying, for example marketing**. It is also a textbook for lecturers wishing to embed sustainability into their subjects. Furthermore, a business school aiming to embed sustainability across its curriculum will find lots of inspiration for each subject, and later in the next chapter, an overview on how to do it systematically.

The book covers **all main subjects** taught in a business or management degree, from accounting to human resources to corporate strategy. It can be used in two different ways: either by selecting a chapter in one subject area, such as economics or operations, and adding it to an existing ‘conventional’ module, usually towards the end of the first year or whenever students have been introduced to the subject in question, or by using the whole book as a textbook for a core module or a final year elective in order to include the sustainability dimension in all subjects of management studied up to that point. For this purpose, the book offers 36 ready-made seminars, three for each subject, but enough to cover a year-long module on sustainability in business. As a student you can also choose to read the matching chapters after you have finished your core modules or in order to get some inspiration for research projects or your assessment. You might also decide to read it in your final year of study to fill the gaps and to increase your employability, or just because you want to be a responsible manager in the future. Whatever the approach is, it is important that you as a student have a basic understanding of the subject, such as supply chain, before you can make use of the seminars included in this book. So you might want to read this book in addition to the core texts in your modules. If lecturers want to integrate more than the three suggested fully developed seminars per subject, there are on average five additional teaching ideas provided in each chapter to enrich their modules. If you as a student want to learn more about the subject you will also find further reading in each chapter and often interesting movies. Special attention has been given to offer a variety of teaching methods, from role-play to case studies to artwork.

Each chapter is divided into five parts:

- **Chapter brief:** Each chapter starts with a chapter brief which outlines for you the learning outcomes and content of the chapter.
- **Core text:** Here you will find an introduction to the key definitions and concepts to be studied in the subject concerned, which are later applied in the seminars.
- **Three fully developed seminars (for a taught session of approximately 50–60 minutes):** Each of these seminars is ready to be delivered without further preparation. They can also be studied

independently by you as a student. We recommend, however, that they are used in a group, as an exchange of ideas and understanding would be beneficial. Most seminars can be broken down into different exercises so that shorter activities can also be chosen. The three seminars in any one subject area use different learning methods, e.g. one artwork, one a game, one a case study.

- **Additional teaching material and ideas:** This section in each chapter offers short summaries of additional ideas for teaching/self-study such as movies or websites. Most of them are designed for additional seminars/tutorials of about 60 minutes in length, but some larger activities are also suggested, such as consultancy projects, which could cover a whole term/module.
- **Further reading:** Here you will find on average five recommendations for deepening your knowledge in this area. Each book or article recommended is summarised in a short paragraph outlining the key benefits for the reader.
- **Solutions manual/teaching aid:** A PDF offering further guidance for lecturers on how to embed sustainability into their discipline, as well as additional teaching material, suggestions for assessment and pedagogical advice on how to use the material offered in this book, can be obtained from the publisher. If you would like a copy, please visit www.greenleaf-publishing.com/studentguide.

Overview of the book

In **Chapter 2**, some of the **key concepts** used in this book and in sustainable management are briefly introduced. Guidance and a **framework on how to embed sustainability into management/business education** are offered. Anyone tasked with embedding sustainability into the curriculum of a business school will find ideas about the various approaches they can take and how it can all be combined together.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the introduction of definitions of sustainable management. It is structured differently, as you are encouraged to explore your own interpretation of sustainability and sustainable management.

It encourages you as the reader to think about sustainability, using activities and ‘seminars’ to support engagement and sense-making. This is not the standard introduction to a textbook, but has been adopted here because we are dealing with uncertainty and a complex problem. In this context, the approach adopted (which encourages you to explore and make sense of sustainability and management in this context for yourself) is more sustainable and ethical than ‘inflicting’ definitions and prescribed vocabulary on you, as someone wanting to learn more about this area and take action as a result.

The definition of sustainable management we have used throughout this book is based on the **triple bottom line** as conceptualised by Elkington (1997). Elkington suggested a focus on **people, planet and profit** in that order of importance. These three dimensions are now commonly used in sustainable management and are often referred to as the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable management. **Chapter 4** is dedicated to the exploration of this concept, discussing each dimension in turn and addressing the question of how these three dimensions of sustainability—social, environmental and economic—can be balanced.

In the **following chapters** the core subjects taught in a business or management course for undergraduates are covered and suggestions are made as to how sustainable management can be taught in accounting, economics, human resources, marketing, operations management, supply chain management and corporate strategy.

In addition, two further topics have been chosen which could form part of a year-long module or could be added to an existing module. Both are considered by the editor to be two of the major sustainability challenges that are faced today. One relates to the area of environmental sustainability: greenhouse gas management (**Chapter 12**). The other relates to the area of social sustainability: corporate peacemaking (**Chapter 13**).

The **fourteenth and final chapter** is dedicated to systems thinking. Here the main questions are how you as a future manager can handle a complex system like an organisation/business, and how you can link together all the subjects learned separately.

References

- Elkington, J. (1997) *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business* (Oxford, UK: Capstone Publishing).
- Robinson, Z. (2009) 'Greening Business: The Ability to Drive Environmental and Sustainability Improvements in the Workplace', in A. Stibbe (ed.), *The Handbook of Sustainability Literacy: Skills for a Changing World* (Totnes, UK: Green Books): 130-36.