THE PERCEPTION OF THE STUDENTS SPECIALIZING TRADE, TOURISM AND SERVICES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

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Abstract.
Over time it has been shown that education is the most efficient and economical way to change the thinking of people to a specific problem and to produce the desired attitudinal change.
Increased awareness and education are important tools in support of sustainable development, and complement the legal, regulatory and economic.
This article presents a study made by the authors aimed to identify how students who have completed specialized studies in Economy Trade, Tourism and Services of the Department of Economics and Business Administration Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi perceive the concept of sustainable development and concerns of current managers on applying it in commercial activity; if they have mastered specific knowledge and if they feel that on their future job, as merchants or decision makers in commercial activity, will be able to consider strategies on sustainable development. An adjacent objective is related to perception the university's role in supporting sustainable development concept, by choosing disciplines, subjects taught and the transmission and the imposition of knowledge.

Keywords: sustainable development, education, commercial activity, the perception of students

JEL classification: A2, L81, Q56

Introduction

The effect on the environment and the preoccupation to minimize negative effects are not matters only of the late decades. As long as man has used resources from the environment without thinking if they regenerate or not, or as long as he has been wasting them without thinking if they are enough for all of the present generation, no matter what part of the world, as well as future generations, *sustainability* has been a matter of too little importance, development hasn't taken place and the environment has been damaged. Still, problems are getting worse in the present days due to the coincidence of several factors:

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industry's exponential development and an "industrialized" agriculture in economically developed countries are counterpoised by lack of resources in undeveloped countries that try to fight extreme poverty, sub nutrition, diseases, marginalization, population increase, etc.

To these we may add *common factors*: population demand for increased consumption, global energy usage, dramatic climatic changes, loading the atmosphere with nitrogen, deteriorating natural resources, affecting the diversity, pollution, more and more rare water resources, diverse urban problems, the interaction between social, economical and environmental problems, as well as many others such as the "stress", worries and at the same time helplessness of the entire world.

Sustainable development refers to that type of development that satisfies present needs without affecting the needs and options of future generations (Schmandt & Ward, 2000).

In search of a holistic definition of the concept sustainable development, Pearce, Barbier and Markandya (1994, pp. 11) initially define "development" – as a vector of the social objectives in question, a list of attributes that society strives to achieve or maximize and that refer to the increase of real income per capita, improvements in health and nutrition status, educational accomplishment, free access, a more equal distribution of income, the increase of basic rights.

According to the above mentioned authors, the essential factor for a sustainable development is *constancy (or increase) of the natural capital stock* or in other words, no negative change in the natural resources capital and the quality of the environment.

This factor also implies *justice* for the socially disadvantaged – poor countries, generation gaps and nature. Also, *justice* appears as a necessity with respect to avoiding the risk generated by the ignorance of present generations towards the type of interactions between the environment, economy and society – or towards the economic and social „evil" that appears due to weak opposition to exterior shocks (soil erosion, agrochemical residue deposits, etc.) -, and economic efficiency, the accent undoubtedly falling on a greater preoccupation for the future and the inhabitants of the future (Pearce, Barbier & Markandya, 1994) (future generations).

Sustainable development also implies equity: the search of means to more evenly distribute limited resources, as well as costs and charges.

Mawhinney (2002, p. 3) made an overview of the definitions found in the literature or which are set by various authorities / bodies with a regulatory role in the field: sustainable development meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987); sustainable development must ensure the necessary conditions for equitable access to basic resources so as to be accessible to every generation (Pearce et. al., 1994); *sustainable development requires programs that directly contribute to improving quality of life of the poorest nations* (Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development, 2001); sustainable development is the economic and social development to ensure the needs of present generation without undermining the ability of future generations to ensure their needs (National Strategies for Sustainable Development, 2000).

1. The role of education in supporting sustainable development

1.1 Education and sustainable development

Throughout the late decades we have noticed a common effort – governments, the private sector and the civil society – to face the challenges of sustainable development, even more so in the case of less developed countries.

This effort assumes a strategic approach at national level that implies (Dalal-Clayton, Bass, 2002): integrating long and medium term objectives with short term actions; establishing horizontal relations between sectors, considering that this is an approach for a coordinate development; establishing vertical relations, because local, national and global politics, governing and development efforts are mutually sustainable; establishing a natural and real partnership between the government, businesses, the community and non-governmental organizations, because problems are too complex to be solved by a group acting alone.

General success for any sustainable development strategy depends on persons'/peoples' involvement and acceptance of responsibility. In order to ensure these two conditions relevant information needs to be supplied so that it may be understood and also applied, moreover abilities and motivation need to be formed in order to sustain this orientation.

Throughout time it has been proved that education is the most efficient and economic means of changing people's way of thinking regarding a certain problem in order to produce the desired change in attitude.

Increased consciousness and education are important instruments in supporting sustainable development and complete those of legal, administrative and economic nature.

The education for sustainable development requires the accomplishment of three objectives: foreseeing how to be more conscious and to how to understand the interdependence between the economic, social and ecologic dimensions of the concept of development, in the urban area as well as the rural one, and the need to deal with it, and also the political, technological, legal, cultural and esthetic preoccupations; offering each person the opportunity to acquire knowledge, values, attitudes and the necessary abilities to contribute to sustainable development; creating new role models of behavior among individuals, groups and society as a whole, that are oriented towards the environment, society and economy.

In reaching these objectives, the role of education assumes: integrating them in the existent educational system; focusing on sustainable development at all levels of the formal educational system; adopting interdisciplinary fields; approaching a global perspective and at the same time bringing forward regional differences; promoting the value of cooperation at local, national and international level to encourage progress towards a sustainable development; focusing on the present as well as the future situation; bringing to the center practical matters that relate the student directly to the environment; instilling a feeling of ethics of preservation; including comprehensive non-formal educational programs that may offer information regarding the sustainable development of a wider area of population through formal means, wherever possible; ensuring a process of continuous learning, throughout the entire life, in schools as well as outside schools; stimulating stakeholders'

active participation in preventing and solving development problems (Dalal-Clayton, Bass, 2002).

Education's objectives for a sustainable development are (Ospina, 1997):

- promoting the understanding of the interdependence between the natural, socio-economic and political systems at local, national and global level;
- encouraging decisive meditation and decision making that may reflect in the personal life style;
- engaging citizens' active participation in building a sustainable development;
- promoting effective governing at all levels.

1.2 The role of the academic environment

The academic environment tries to point out the critical matters that development assumes, to promote answers based on science, to encourage a greater involvement of scientific and technical communities throughout the world in working with governments, the private sectors, international organizations and institutions that may shape a sustainable future (Schmandt, Ward, 2000).

Generically, the educational system/the academic environment also finds its place among actors that supply research (research regarding the physical environment, the impact of politics, multilateral environmental agreements – why and how they work, how they have been developed, how they can be improved) in the case of the life cycle of Multilateral Environmental Agreements[1], concerning sustainable development. Its role becomes the more important as it brings forward *independence* compared to the other potential actors – the government, NGO's and „think tanks", as well as intergovernmental agencies (including secretaries of multilateral agreements). In other words, the academic environment has research as its main function, but, at the same time, it is a source of an independent and „peer-reviewed analysis", an aspect more valid than in the case of other actors. (Figure no. 1)

[1]Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) are the key result of the 1992 Rio Summit, established with the purpose of underlining and focusing the attention on the environment; see "Links to Multilateral Environmental Agreements, http://www.unep.org/DEC/links/index.html; they represent the main means available under international regulations for countries to work together on global matters of environment. They are agreements between countries that take the shape „soft-law", establishing the compulsory principles not stated by laws that parties shall respect in considering actions that affect a specific environmental problem, or „hard-law", establishing compulsory actions that are stated by laws, in case of a matter affecting the environment; see http://www.mfe.govt.nz/laws/meas/.

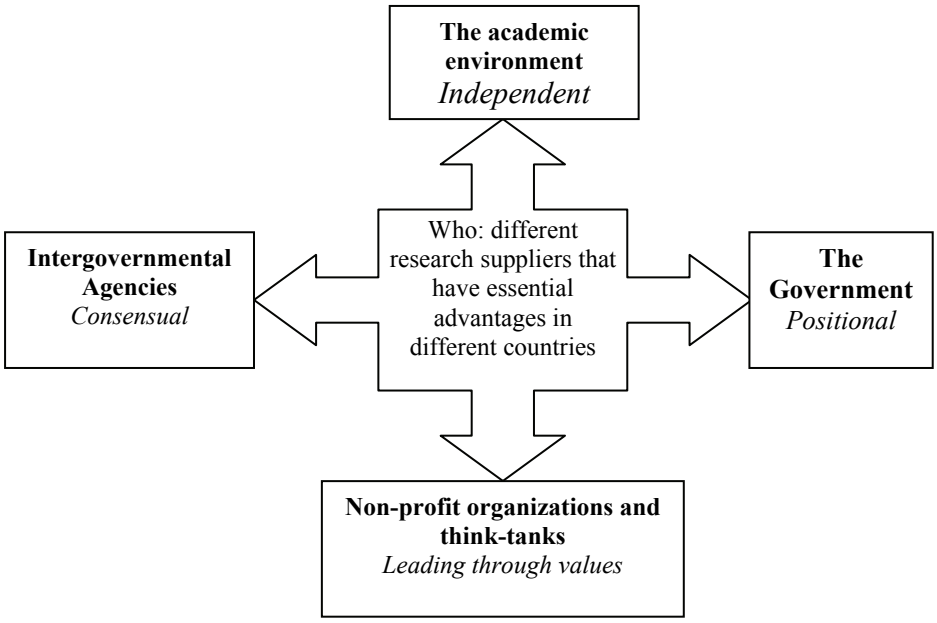


Figure no. 1: The role of the academic environment among other research suppliers in supporting sustainable development

Source: adapted from Tom Bigg, Survival for a small planet: the sustainable development agenda, p. 76

Developing nations look for technological transfer, for making new partnerships with the private sectors and developing their own scientific and technical capacities. As they do that, quality and content, academic efforts and research agenda become critical factors in organizing and investing in knowledge regarding sustainable development, and in building international networks and partnerships with the purpose of exchanging knowledge and experience. For a differentiated accomplishment of development, all those being educated must be empowered to perceive and connect their disciplines in a differenced manner and to develop knowledge that will be useful in their activities as future deciders outside the academic and research environment (Serageldin, 1997).

1.3 Teachers' mission

Teachers have the mission to propose for the study programs adequate disciplines that may refer to the matter of sustainable development, to correlate analytical programs so that students may understand this complex concept from an interdisciplinary perspective, to encourage the student to become more conscious of the importance of sustainable development and to apply its principles as a future decider or specialist.

Increasing teachers and students' responsibility is considered to be a future oriented vision in *technology education* (Pavlova, 2007) as well. Moral values have priority as they are the

means of guiding teachers and students' practice in formulating politics. Arguments have been found to prove that the process of specializing schools may be applied in the context of developed countries and developing countries as well, and technology education may offer the opportunity to empower individuals through the development of their general capabilities/competences. Technology education has been established in the late 80's within the imperative economic paradigm.

This aspect offers a basis for developing a new argument in establishing the education for sustainable development, the latter being the most appropriate frame for creating moral values in education's technology.

Sustainable development is also considered among the most important strategies of empowering individuals in terms of increasing welfare and security and acquiring the necessary abilities.

Moreover, teachers' role is not only to teach technical excellence and to offer counseling on matters relevant to sustainable development, but also to teach students the values that allow and promote a new global ethics (Husain, 2007), to be more precise, aspects that are known not as information, but as meaning, "focusing on what we know in our life and having the courage to live in the light of our profound conscience" (Ladner, 1997).

The teacher's mission in supporting sustainable development depends on the way he/she knows how to enforce a trio of quality: quality of environment, quality of life, quality of human behavior towards the environment. (Figure no. 2)

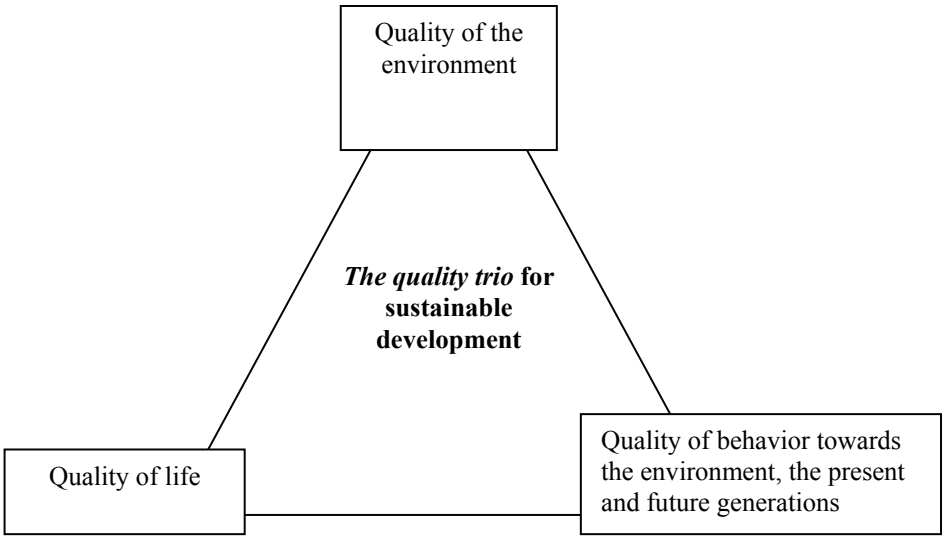


Figure no. 2: The quality trio for sustainable development

2. Study regarding students' perception towards sustainable development in commercial activity and the role of education in supporting it

2.1 Research methodology

The general objective of the research

The present exploratory study had as general objective identifying the way in which students that have graduated from Trade, Tourism and Services Economics, within The Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, perceive the concept of sustainable development and the preoccupations that present managers have in the respective field, whether they have appropriated the specific knowledge and if they consider that, in the future, as future deciders, they will manage to integrate sustainable development in their applied strategies.

An adjacent objective is related to the perception regarding the role of the university in supporting the concept of sustainable development, by choosing the taught disciplines and by transmitting and imposing knowledge.

Research premise, assumptions and hypothesis

The *major premise* from which we start in our research is that students from the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration already have knowledge about the definition of the concept and importance of sustainable development in commercial activity that they have accumulated over the years of study.

At the same time, an a*ssumption research* to be verified is that the current labor market conditions do not represent an appropriate framework to encourage involvement in promoting sustainable development initiative, students considering that the Romanian managers which coordinate commercial activity manifest minimal interest in this regard.

In this context, another *research hypothesis* is that while students are trained to ensure "fairness and justice" in the field of sustainable development when making commercial activity they have the perception that they won't meet sufficient conditions to apply principles, methods and tools learned while developing future commercial business.

The instrument used in the present research

The instrument used in this work has been the *questionnaire.* It has been distributed in June 2009 to all students from the above mentioned department that have signed up for the diploma exam. Of the 270 questionnaires handed out, 174 have been taken in for analysis.

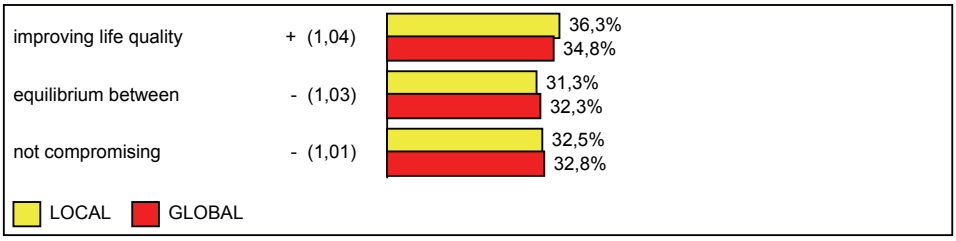
2.2 Interpreting the data

The gathered data have been interpreted with the help of the statistical interpretation program SPHINX PLUS, this article presenting only the initial results, without the extended analysis of the results. The percentages from the tables are global, the percentage for each value being referred to the total percentage of the answers. In codifying the variants, the short SD has been used for the term Sustainable Development (used in English specialized literature).

The design of the questionnaire

The questionnaire is made of 14 questions: 13 multiple answer questions and 1 single answer question, but also with an open answer variant. To these we may add the identification data of the respondents. Of the 174 students participating in this exploratory study – 137 are female and 37 male and 169 are under 25 years of age. In the respect of career orientation – 88 students prefer tourism, 53 trade, 28 services and 1 management.

The questions referred to the following aspects, presented in figure no.3.



economic development – sustainable development

not compromising the needs of future generations	**66**	**32.8%**
improving life quality and regeneration	**70**	**34.8%**
equilibrium between human activities and the environment	**65**	**32.3%**
Total	**201**	**100.0%**

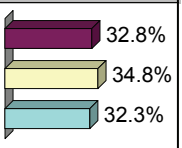


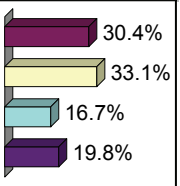
Figure no. 3: Associating the concept sustainable development with economic development

As it can be noticed most answers referred to improving the quality of life and regenerating resources (a rate of 34% of respondents chose this option). The differences between the selected answer variants are very small, which shows that students globally and correctly understand the concept of sustainable development, under its three facets: not compromising the satisfaction of future generations' needs, ensuring the quality of life and resources regeneration and a state of equilibrium between developing human activities and maintaining the quality of the environment.

Intensive usage of technology or low quality of technological processes affects the environment. 87 of the answers show that this is the main reason why students consider the business world should take into consideration sustainable development in deploying their commercial activities. Another answer with a similar percentage is the one related to the exhausting of resources. (Table no. 1)

Table no. 1: The reasons for which the concept of sustainable development is a preoccupation aiming at the world of business

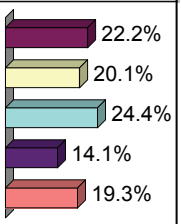
businesses – sustainable development		
exhausting resources	80	30.4%
technologies' impact	87	33.1%
residuum impact	44	16.7%
the impact of dangerous and toxic materials	52	19.8%
Total	263	100.0%



Among the considered effects, most respondents consider that earth pollution is the most striking (118 answers, 24,4% of respondents) and second comes air pollution. (Table no. 2)

Table no. 2: The effects of the lack of preoccupation in a sustainable development of agents that deploy commercial activities

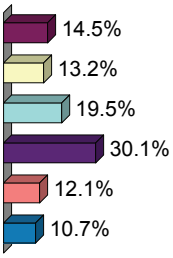
The effects of lack of preoccupation for SD		
air pollution	107	22.2%
water pollution	97	20.1%
earth pollution	118	24.4%
acoustic pollution	68	14.1%
destroying flora and fauna	93	19.3%
Total	483	100.0%



Most options refer to strategies *that may be followed by economic agents in their commercial activities in order to ensure sustainable development by renewing the existent products and processes (110 students consider this option being valuable). This aspect may be correlated with the answer to the question regarding the reasons why the concept of sustainable development is a preoccupation that aims at the business world,* the biggest percentage being held by the usage of technology. (Table no. 3)

Table no. 3: Strategies that may be followed by economic agents in their commercial activities in order to ensure sustainable development

Strategies for SD		
refusing destructive activities	53	14.5%
refusing suspected activities	48	13.2%
reducing the usage of insufficient/difficultly recyclable resources	71	19.5%
renewing the existent products and processes	110	30.1%
reusing materials	44	12.1%
recovering and recycling wastes	39	10.7%
Total	365	100.0%



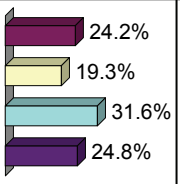
Correlations obtained after crossing the variables "Strategies that may be followed by economic agents in their activities in order to ensure sustainable development" and "Reasons why the concept of sustainable development is a preoccupation that aims at the business world" are presented in Table no. 4. Statistical analyze illustrates that the dependence is not significant in this case ($\chi 2 = 5,37$, df = 20, 1-p = 0,05%).

Table no. 4: Correlation strategies - motives

Strategies for SD / business - sustainable development	Refusing destructive activities	Refusing suspected activities	Reducing the usage of insufficient/ difficultly recyclable resources	Renewing the existent products and processes	Re-using materials	Re-covering and recycling wastes	TOTAL
No answer	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Exhausting resources	4	0	1	-1	0	1	200
Technologies' impact	-1	0	-1	4	2	0	213
Residuum impact	-1	0	0	0	1	1	130
The impact of dangerous and toxic materials	0	1	1	-1	-2	3	149
TOTAL	106	89	122	187	101	91	696

The quantity of wastes generated by economic agents is, in the opinion of Romanian students, the "sharpest" alarm signal (103 answers, 31,6 % of students) that should raise the interest of all those involved in sustainable development. Also connected to the trade area is the fact that in the late years sale areas have been extended to the deficit of green areas, 81 (24,8 %) of the students signaling that this may very well be considered a very disquieting situation. (Table no. 5)

Table no. 5: Alarm signals that enforce a special attention given to the concept of sustainable development in commercial activities

Alarm signals			
excessive energy consumption	**79**	**24.2%**	
great volume of rezidual water	**63**	**19.3%**	
waste quantity	**103**	**31.6%**	
enlargement of green areas sold-affected	**81**	**24.8%**	
Total	**326**	**100.0%**	

What should be a main preoccupation for traders in order for their activity to support sustainable development is connected to the usage of ecological packaging – 109 respondents have referred to this aspect. Moreover, this would be a solution that would

minimize the wastes quantity at the same time, but also the recycling costs, a measure of social, as well as economic importance. (Table no.6)

Table no. 6: Preoccupations for traders with respect to sustainable development

Directions of preoccupation in SD			
efficient administration of potable water	**64**	**8.2%**	8.2%
efficient administration of waste water	**57**	**7.3%**	7.3%
efficient administration of toxic substances	**62**	**8.0%**	8.0%
energy consumption	**84**	**10.8%**	10.8%
minimizing wastes	**82**	**10.5%**	10.5%
selective wastes collecting	**85**	**10.9%**	10.9%
recycling packaging	**88**	**11.3%**	11.3%
ecological packaging	**109**	**14.0%**	14.0%
alternative sources of energy	**71**	**9.1%**	9.1%
ecological products	**76**	**9.8%**	9.8%
Total	**778**	**100.0%**	

Among *management measures that may be efficiently undertaken by traders in promoting sustainable development in commercial activity,* the most important one is considered to be informing, educating the consumers (84 answers), second place being held by the changes in management structures and operations. The other measures have equal results – 64 answers. (Table no.7)

Table no. 7: Management measures that may be efficiently undertaken by traders in promoting sustainable development

Management measures			
recognizing the nature of problems	**64**	**18.3%**	18.3%
changes in management structures and operations	**74**	**21.1%**	21.1%
personnel training	**64**	**18.3%**	18.3%
rewarding the personnel	**64**	**18.3%**	18.3%
informing, educating consumers	**84**	**24.0%**	24.0%
Total	**350**	**100.0%**	

Education at the level of the entire society (100 answers) and a change in attitude (90 answers) are the two factors that show students agree university finds its place in promoting the concept of sustainable development. (Table no.8)

Table no. 8: Factors that will ensure traders involvement in supporting the concept of sustainable development in commercial activity

SD implicating factors			
attitude change	**90**	**22.1%**	22.1%
personnel training	**56**	**13.8%**	13.8%
new investments in technology	**58**	**14.3%**	14.3%
society level education	**100**	**24.6%**	24.6%
socio-economic level increase	**51**	**12.5%**	12.5%
legal system consolidation	**52**	**12.8%**	12.8%
Total	**407**	**100.0%**	

Table no. 9 presents correlations resulted from crossing the variable "The role of universities in considering the concept of sustainable development within economic activities" and "Factors that will ensure traders' involvement in supporting the concept of sustainable development".

Table no. 9: The implications of universities in sustainable development

Universities' role **SD implicating factors**	consciousness	forming values	learning instruments	**TOTAL**
attitude change	-3 (27)	+13 (74)	-10 (38)	**139 (139)**
personnel training	+4 (20)	-1 (45)	+0 (27)	**92 (92)**
new investments in technology	+0 (18)	+0 (44)	+0 (25)	**87 (87)**
society level education	-4 (29)	+5 (78)	-1 (43)	**150 (150)**
socio-economic level increase	+2 (18)	-20 (38)	+21 (28)	**84 (84)**
legal system consolidation	+0 (18)	-5 (41)	+5 (27)	**86 (86)**
TOTAL	**130 (130)**	**320 (320)**	**188 (188)**	**638 (638)**

The level of interest presently manifested in the management applied by Romanian traders for sustainable development is situated at a medium level in the students' opinion (96 answers). Only 20 respondents believe a high interest is being manifested. The conclusion that may be detached could be that efforts to "educate" traders and future traders must be intense and the university has an active role through its possibility of informing and teaching, as well as through its offer of continuous training. (Table no. 10)

Table no. 10: Assessment of the level of interest presently manifested in the management applied by Romanian traders for sustainable development

Interest in SD management			
minimum	**58**	**33.3%**	33.3%
medium	**96**	**55.2%**	55.2%
maximum	**20**	**11.5%**	11.5%
Total	**174**	**100.0%**	

Among the responsibilities concerning traders we may note *partnerships with public authorities and other companies in the private sector in supporting programs for sustainable development* (94 answers), but also personnel, clients and local communities' involvement in environmental matters (82 answers). The first option proves once again that students are aware of the fact that sustainable development programs imply a common effort from all interested groups, considering that financial funds are needed, team work, but also time to initiate, perform, coordinate and implement them. Next places are taken by the accent stressed upon planning for durability (78 answers) and employee training programs (72 answers). (Table no.11)

Table no. 11: Traders' responsibilities concerning sustainable development in commercial activity

Traders' responsibilities			
obeying the law	24	4.5%	4.5%
employee training programs	72	13.6%	13.6%
planning durability	78	14.7%	14.7%
partnerships	94	17.7%	17.7%
less polluting means of transportation	71	13.4%	13.4%
respecting territory usage	40	7.5%	7.5%
implicating personnel, clients, local communities	82	15.5%	15.5%
supporting financial programs	69	13.0%	13.0%
Total	**530**	**100.0%**	

The greatest percentage of answers (54,1 % at a global level) regarding *The role of universities in considering the concept of sustainable development within economic activities is that of forming values – 133 students have made this affirmation.* (Table no. 12)

Table no. 12: The role of universities in considering the concept of sustainable development within economic activities

Universities role			
consciousness	41	16.7%	16.7%
forming values	133	54.1%	54.1%
learning instruments	72	29.3%	29.3%
Total	**246**	**100.0%**	

Although the results obtained in the questionnaire prove that the disciplines taught at the university and the message sent by the teachers referring to sustainable development have reached the set educational objective - *sustainable development requires attention from actors involved in economic activities* - students are still pessimistic with respect to the degree in which they will have the possibility to apply themselves the knowledge held in the field, as future specialists or management factors involved in commercial activities. This answer cannot be isolated from the previous answer – the fact that in the managers'

activity there isn't a very high interest for preoccupation and effort towards sustainable development, but rather medium and graduating students will have to first of all direct themselves to existent companies in order to get a job. (Table no.13)

Table no. 13: Applying the concept of sustainable development as future specialists and management factors involved in commercial activities

SD as future specialists			
theoretically, economy not interested	15	7.3%	7.3%
theoretically, economy not ready	36	17.6%	17.6%
theoretically, market-insufficient resources	32	15.6%	15.6%
considered, minimum level	101	49.3%	49.3%
considered, maximum level	21	10.2%	10.2%
Total	**205**	**100.0%**	

In addition, as it will be noticed further on, these affirmations are also supported by the answers given to the question referring to the impact of Romania's integration in the European Union on considering the concept of sustainable development within the strategies applied by economic agents. Most students – 72 – consider that the law is the factor forcing the agents to adapt to the new requirements concerning sustainable development, but the efforts are still minimal, thus traders will not do more than required by the respective regulations. (Table no.14)

Table no. 14: The impact of Romania's integration in the European Union on considering the concept of sustainable development within the strategies applied by economic agents

UE integration – SD level of preoccupation			
minimum, obeying the law	72	35.6%	35.6%
maximum, after several years	63	31.2%	31.2%
maximum, reducing costs	30	14.9%	14.9%
Maximum, competition	17	8.4%	8.4%
maximum, increase in the level of education and personal training	20	9.9%	9.9%
Total	**202**	**100.0%**	

The first place among disciplines that should include in their study curricula matters concerning sustainable development within commercial activities is taken by management disciplines – 135 answers. The correlation can be made based on the answers given to previous questions from which we could conclude that students feel changes in management structures and operations can be included among management measures. Also, considering the fact that companies are forced to adopt quality standards, the Quality Management discipline is among the first places with 97 answers. (Table no. 15)

Table no. 15: The disciplines that should include in their study curricula matters concerning sustainable development

Disciplines of study			
Management disciplines	**135**	**28.7%**	28.7%
Marketing	**51**	**10.8%**	10.8%
Merchandising	**39**	**8.3%**	8.3%
Hotel management	**33**	**7.0%**	7.0%
Quality Management	**97**	**20.6%**	20.6%
MRU	**61**	**13.0%**	13.0%
Economy projects	**55**	**11.7%**	11.7%
Total	**471**	**100.0%**	

Conclusions

Among the main conclusions, in the theoretical as well as practical study, we may consider that:

- in the present context, sustainable development must be a priority, at international, national, regional and local level;
- through their activities, traders also have the responsibility to educate and involve the personnel, consumers and clients in the spirit of promoting sustainable development;
- graduates from The Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, the department of Trade, Tourism and Services Economy, as future traders and management factors, presently consider that "changes" are necessary in the strategies and measures applied by Romanian traders because the interest of the latter in sustainable development is for now at a medium level, only as a means of obeying the law (a consequence being the measures generated by the integration of our country in the European Union);
- following the study carried out among students we reach the conclusion that they are not convinced they will have an important role in supporting sustainable development, but that their role will be considered at a minimum level, due to the lack of interest of present managers;
- through its mission, the university is called upon to take on an active role in forming values and competences in supporting sustainable development.

A general conclusion that may be detached from the present study is that the Romanian student, graduate from Trade, Tourism and Services Economics, has the necessary knowledge and the appropriate vision concerning sustainable development and the necessity of the effort to apply the necessary strategies that may support – at least in the near future – its involvement in the field. We may unreservedly say that, from this point of view, *"the university respects its mission"*.

Still, students are "pessimistic", considering that they are firmly convinced that, with everything going on in the labor market, in the sense that present managers show preoccupations for sustainable development only at a medium level, their possibility to follow their own values, beliefs and to apply their whole ensemble of knowledge in the filed will be limited.

The question (or dilemma) that appears is connected to future consequences: if the involvement of the actors in the economic life is at a medium level or depends only on the applicability of laws, without doing anything extra, and students are convinced that they won't have the freedom to change anything more either, who should or who has the mission to continue the effort to ensure "justice" for nature, for the environmental resources of poor countries and of future generations?

The answer still surprisingly hints at the university and its role: students that graduate from the university will have to carry with them not only their knowledge, but also the *values that show respect for the environment,* they will have to change attitudes and behaviors. At the same time, the university must call on its ex students for continuous training, to instill in them also the same values and principles and to insist upon the *importance of global ethics and sustainable development.*

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