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## Introduction: Social Sustainability in Business Education

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**Title:** Introduction: Social Sustainability in Business Education

**Year:** 2024

**Version:** Accepted manuscript

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### Please cite the original version:

Šilenskytė, A., Cordova, M., Schmitz, M. A. & Toh, S. M. (2024). Introduction: Social Sustainability in Business Education. In A. Šilenskytė, M. Cordova, M. A. Schmitz & S. M. Toh (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Social Sustainability in Business Education* (pp. 1-23). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-50168-5\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-50168-5_1)

## Introduction: Social sustainability in business education

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### Abstract

In the introduction, we frame the importance of social sustainability for business and broader society, and explain why business education has substantial power to foster it, making a significant contribution to the global collective effort aimed at achieving economic, social, and environmental sustainability. To this end, we elaborate on the concept of social sustainability, clarify how it connects to the environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability, and explain which of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize issues related to social sustainability. Additionally, we summarize teaching innovations documented from every continent in the world that are featured in this handbook. The richness of the voices and perspectives featured, as well as their crossdisciplinarity, are at the heart of the ethos of this handbook, and we elucidate how and why higher education institutions, managers of business programs, educators and researchers would benefit from the featured contributions. Finally, we outline some tips on how to use the handbook effectively when researching social sustainability and when implanting social-sustainability-focused SDGs in business programs, courses, and/or lesson plans in different parts of the world, considering the contextual needs of the learner, the business education provider, and the educator.

**Keywords:** social sustainability, business education, higher education, Sustainable Development Goals, teaching innovations

### 1. The concept of social sustainability and its importance for business and society

Social sustainability has been, and to some extent remains, a mysterious and somewhat fuzzy concept. The term 'social sustainability' is used when referring to different meanings and perspectives, ranging from issues related to justice, inclusion, equity, equality, democracy, social capital, and human skills, to issues concerning human rights, improving the health and well-being of the community, and preserving social values, cultural identity, and traditions (Ajmal et al. 2018; Vallance et al. 2011). The lack of a clear definition and conceptualization stems

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from several reasons. Social sustainability has been discussed and researched much less than the other two dimensions of sustainability – environmental and economic (Ajmal et al. 2018; Eizenberg and Jabareen 2017). Also, it has been acknowledged that all sustainability dimensions are wicked (i.e., complex, messy, contextual, socially appraised, and without good/bad or true/false solutions, as solving one issue may create a problem with another (Rašković 2022)), by their nature. However, social sustainability in particular is characterized by wickedness since social norms, values, ethics, and the understanding of good and bad are as diverse as the global population.

Moreover, social sustainability's relationship with the other sustainability dimensions is fuzzy. Some scholars treat social sustainability as a stand-alone dimension, unrelated to the other two, whereas others argue that social sustainability is a fundamental building block for the environmental and economic sustainability dimensions, because no change can be achieved in the absence of social structures and without social action being taken (Boyer et al. 2016). For example, socially disadvantaged people on the edge of or in poverty "*will not interpret ... additional taxes as a means of countering climate change, but as an impediment to heating their homes adequately*" (Vallance et al. 2011, p. 345). Therefore, it remains unclear whether the conceptualization of social sustainability as it stands is sufficient, or it should be discussed as a socio-economic and socio-environmental phenomenon. Given the above, social sustainability requires closer attention and further research within business, policymaking, and educational spheres.

Social sustainability has proven difficult to conceptualize in many aspects and across different contexts, but particularly in the business context. This is because of the diversity of the involved stakeholders, whose interests need to be addressed when defining and conceptualizing it (Ajmal et al. 2018; Foot and Ross 2004). Yet, with the increasing stakeholder pressures to establish a clear conceptualization and measurements of social sustainability, and widespread legal requirements to report business efforts towards all three dimensions of sustainability (Ajmal et al. 2018), several ways of comprehending and acknowledging social sustainability in business have emerged. The current conceptualization of social sustainability in business is cross-disciplinary, very broad, and crystallizes around three major themes: (1) *Safety and security* (i.e., fair labor practices, health and safety at work); (2) *Learning and growth* (i.e., education and training, job security, employment); and (3) *Community development* (i.e., diversity, equity, and inclusion, social involvement, human rights, consumer and product responsibility) (Ajmal et al. 2018). Each of the themes carries a significant agenda for research and for businesses striving towards social sustainability.

The three themes of social sustainability have also been incorporated into a few specific models for developing business or economic activity. For instance, scholars have been exploring how social sustainability aspects can be incorporated into the circular economy business model (i.e., Mies and Gold 2021; Moreau et al. 2017; Padilla-Rivera et al. 2020). The notion of a circular economy (CE) is a sustainability-oriented business model which suggests that resources in any economic activity, and business in particular, should be used in a circular (i.e., reused, refurbished, recycled, repurposed, etc.) instead of linear (i.e., take-make-dispose) manner to reduce the environmental impacts of business operations and to maximize resource efficiency (Mies and Gold 2021; Moreau et al. 2017). While initially the CE was studied with a focus on environmental, technological, and economic aspects, with the use of physical resources explored in a circular way (Mies and Gold 2021; Padilla-Rivera et al. 2020), the understanding of the necessity to explore social aspects when adopting such revo-

lutionary business models is growing. Moreau et al. (2017) argue that achieving CE environmental and material-use goals is not possible unless the CE's social dimension is considered. Mies and Gold (2021) add that a transition towards circularity is only possible if business models, consumption practices, and other social aspects change together with production practices or technologies, allowing for a circular and efficient use of materials and energy.

The importance of addressing the social dimension, together with the environmental and economic sustainability dimensions, is also visible in the global guidelines for sustainability defined within the United Nations' Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs). These global priorities, which apply to every member of society and every organization, including businesses, their managers, and employees, call for a collective addressing of social issues. These social issues are SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 12 (Responsible Production and Consumption), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). SDG 17 encourages partnerships among all the SDGs, which collectively represent three dimensions of sustainability – social, environmental, and economic.

Thus, more than half of the UN SDGs speak to social sustainability despite global discourses primarily being focused on environment-oriented themes, such as climate change, deforestation, or a lack of clean water. The extensive focus on social issues within the SDGs is understandable, because most of the environmental, economic and social challenges are caused by human activity. Also, as illustrated in the example above, where people in poverty might interpret taxes aimed at tackling climate change as a threat to their well-being, most of the solutions to environmental, economic and social challenges may only become feasible once society's needs have been addressed and people can open up to thinking beyond the circle of their daily burdens. It is here where the so-called grand societal challenges show their 'wicked' side, as complex and complicated problems arising from the competing and conflicting needs of different stakeholders (Van Tulder and Van Mil 2022).

In the business context, a similar example could be as follows: employees discriminated against, unhealthy, or working in poor conditions are unlikely to think about the firm's strategy, which requires them to focus on a more efficient use of the firm's resources, or to create innovations that will make the firm's products more environmentally friendly. On the other hand, appropriate treatment of employees, inclusion and the appreciation of diversity, and the alignment of individual and firm needs can all lead to the workforce being more committed to the firm's strategic goals, and being innovative and reciprocal (Machado and Davim 2018; Shore et al. 2011; Šilenskytė 2020; Šilenskytė et al. 2022). This offers a better chance to achieve economic, environmental, and social sustainability, providing such aims were embedded in the firm's strategic goals that the employees were requested to implement.

Therefore, when considering sustainable business in a broader sense, or more specifically, sustainability-oriented business models, such as the CE, the social dimension of sustainability seems to be integral, or at least vital to consider. In this regard, the next, naturally arising question then becomes how to design, implement, monitor, and assess actions towards social sustainability, if they are primarily intangible by nature, and socially co-constructed and appraised. The latter has led to some social sustainability indicators being more political, and lacking plausibility or rigorous foundations (Eizenberg and Jabareen 2017), concerned only with an organization's impact on the social systems within which it operates, or focused primarily on its stakeholder impact (Mies and Gold 2021). Imperfect directions and measures

for business are obstacles to setting goals, implementing them, and measuring their results (Kaplan and Norton 2006).

As a result, various Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards and reporting forms have been designed to capture a variety of social issues within the context of business. For instance, the Global Reporting Initiative Standards (GRI n.d.) include standards for assessing and reporting on social sustainability issues, such as employment, labor/management relations, occupational health and safety, training and education, diversity and equal opportunity, non-discrimination, child labor, forced or compulsory labor, supplier social assessment, customer health and safety, and customer privacy. EcoVadis<sup>2</sup>, the world's largest provider of business sustainability ratings, which issues medals to firms for their sustainability performance, gives significant importance to social sustainability issues, assessing ethics, labor and human rights, and sustainable procurement aspects, in addition to the environmental performance of firms. Based on these themes, they also provide enterprises with solutions for reporting sustainability. Other standards of similar kind are International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB), Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D), Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the European Sustainability Reporting Standard (ESRS).

It would seem that we might already have all the necessary building blocks for addressing social sustainability in business and through business activities. Yet, myriad social challenges remain present globally and, when left unaddressed, can fester into more significant problems (Van Tulder and Van Mil 2022). Why is this so? Solving social issues through accounting-type thinking, captured in various reporting initiatives and sustainability standards, hardly does justice to their wicked nature and does not reflect the complexities involved. Reporting systems and numbers do not address social evaluations, stakeholder interpretations and interplay of their interests, relationships, emotions and feelings, and the cognitive limitations of human beings that are involved when we consider social aspects. "*Expanded readings of social sustainability indicate the need to rely less on 'objective data' and 'scientific evidence' to stimulate changed human perspectives*" and behaviors; instead, the integration of facts based on rigorous measurements, practitioner views, and social interpretations of the broader society are needed to achieve the change towards social sustainability (Vallance et al. 2011, p. 347).

Next, reporting systems do not capture the multilevel ethos of social sustainability. Thinking based on setting goals in business, communicating them to stakeholders, and measuring and reporting the achievement of the set goals is based on the assumption that the goals are understood, interpreted, and enacted in a linear manner across all levels of analysis, such as the corporate, unit, function, team, and individual levels, thus making the linearly intended impact within and outside of (i.e., in the community, or at the national or supranational level) the organization (Šilenskytė and Smale 2021). However, for several decades, the limitations of such thinking about business management have been discussed, pointing to the fact that these relationships are not linear and that social outcomes at different levels of analysis emerge through diverse interpretations, actions, and interactions of individuals (Felin et al. 2015; Foss and Pedersen 2019; Jepperson and Meyer 2011; Šilenskytė and Smale 2021; Šilenskytė et al. 2022). This has vast implications for the way we approach the ethos of social sustainability in the business context. For example, shall we discuss social sustainability in business as a process, thereby focusing on the development of socially sustainable processes in business; shall we discuss it as an outcome within business and society; or shall we discuss

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ecovadis.com/>

it as both – recognizing the multilevel, multidimensional (wicked and interconnected with the environmental and economic dimensions) nature of this phenomenon that leads to wicked outcomes in business and society? The multilevel aspects have barely been captured in the current conceptualization of social sustainability, and yet they need to be considered when addressing it in business and through business activities.

However, capturing all the above requires a specific mindset, and a wide range of knowledge and skills, many of which are cross-disciplinary. This required set can be conceptualized as multiple forms of intelligence that "*include cognitive, emotional, technological, political, ethical, and cultural forms*" (Kovoor-Misra 2020, p. 155). This is why we decided to develop a book that would help go beyond the accounting-type thinking on social sustainability, and support the development of business professionals' knowledge, skills, and mindsets in such a way that would entirely embrace the complexity of social sustainability, enabling them to lead change towards sustainable development through business activities.

## **2. The aims of the book: Building business education that nurtures social sustainability**

*"Universities are places of social development that inspire and provoke, question and answer, build beliefs and destroy myths, that delve into the depths of the past and rise into the heights of the future, that debate the metaphysics of existence, yet create models to decode the mind – the university represents a way of life"* (Chandra 2017, p. 9).

Education is the "consciousness of society" and one of the primary enablers of positive social change globally. The purpose of higher education institutions (HEIs) is to create (1) *citizenship* (i.e., growing enlightened citizens who are capable of using their privilege of education to create sustainable private and public goods), (2) a path to *vocation* (i.e., providing means for accessing and succeeding in (self-)employment), and (3) *love for learning* (i.e., creating an educational environment that instills curiosity and engages learners in understanding and debating the quality of the businesses and society we build) (Chandra 2017). These three components of HEIs' purpose, as argued by Chandra (2017), are present in the "universities that matter". Similar ideals for HEIs are widely promoted by global university accrediting bodies, such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), that aim "*to transform business education globally for positive societal impact*" (AACSB n.d.; Sewchurran 2022). Moreover, comparable and even wider expectations are communicated through the United Nations' SDG 4 (Quality Education) that calls for ensuring inclusive, equitable, accessible for all quality education, including lifelong learning opportunities, focused on the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development (Tonegava 2022).

The possibility to enable social change globally is particularly pertinent in business education, which sets the standards, practices, directions, and mindset for conducting economic activity by supplying to the market business graduates who will lead such economic activity (Ajmal et al. 2018; Ghoshal 2005; Syed et al. 2010). Therefore, this book is designed with the aim to support HEIs, especially those providing business education, the managers of business programs, and educators within them, in the development of educational experiences that will enable (future) business professionals to recognize the equal importance of citizenship, vocation, and learning. When these three pillars are rooted in the mindsets, knowledge, and skills of graduates, and in this way are carried from the HEI into business strategy, management, organizational culture, and daily practices, businesses are more likely to achieve a wide-reaching impact, especially regarding social sustainability.

These ideals, however, have not always been followed in practice and some argue that HEIs have diverged from their primary purpose. Some scholars claim that HEIs have focused primarily on paving the way to vocation, instead of creating citizenship and a love for learning on equal terms (Chandra 2017). Business schools in particular have been criticized for propagating "*amoral theories that freed their students from any sense of moral responsibility*" (Ghoshal 2005, p. 76) and providing an education and developing mindsets that are incapable of supporting graduates as they address practical and grand challenges (Syed et al. 2010). Moreover, business schools have been suggested to be paying insufficient attention to the knowledge and skills needed for responsible management or the implementation of SDGs (Azmat et al. 2023), and insufficiently considering the wider implications of environmental changes (e.g., the pandemic and other disasters, revolution brought about by advanced technologies) (Kovoor-Misra 2020; Krishnamurthy 2020), and the contemporary practices and culture that are dominant in business schools (Kovoor-Misra, 2020). This critique provides a solid foundation for researching the situation in HEIs and seeking to develop restorative solutions.

Having said that, we do recognize that some HEIs have made significant developments in holistically fulfilling the purpose of an HEI. If transformation towards SDG 4, and the availability of quality education within some HEIs, had not been available, we would not have been able to find and document fascinating teaching innovations (Dieleman et al. 2022) that are being employed to fulfill HEI ideals striving towards positive social change. In fact, the innovations that we document in this handbook are implemented in all major geographical regions – South and North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Australia, and Oceania. The contributors to this handbook have demonstrated that teaching innovations supporting the implementation of social sustainability by developing the mindsets, knowledge, and skills needed to (re-)solve global challenges through business activities that intersect with societal and policy issues and make an impact beyond business organizations, are present in every continent.

Fortified with these tested and highly effective teaching philosophies and models, as well as the belief that "the teaching objectives of the university ensure that new skills are infused into society through its graduates" (Chandra 2017, p. 10), this book aims at creating awareness in every HEI, and among the faculty in them, of the power they have in their hands, thus inspiring more scholars and HEIs to lead the change towards social sustainability through the education of (future) business leaders.

However, having the power is insufficient; also having the means to do it is necessary. There have been a number of calls for research on ways in which the grand challenges prioritized by the SDGs (Van Tulder and Van Mil 2022) can be addressed (Buckley et al. 2017; George et al. 2016; Ghauri et al. 2021; Seelos et al. 2023; Sinkovics et al. 2022; Van Tulder et al. 2021), and on embedding SDGs in business education, which is a complex and challenging process (Azmat et al. 2023; Tonegava 2022). Answering such calls, our handbook aims to shed light on multiple social sustainability issues to be considered in business when implementing specific SDGs, discusses research-informed philosophies and teaching principles that enable the effective development of the mindset, knowledge, and skills necessary for socially sustainable development in business, and offers educational content, models, activities, and cases that support the transition from theory about education for sustainable development, to action. Thus, instead of providing another research agenda, this handbook provides a toolbox comprised of rigorous academic insights *and* practical suggestions and best practices, to bring

such academic insights into business programs and classrooms, thereby making the theoretical insights actionable.

We do acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses arising from this somewhat unorthodox handbook design. For some, for instance, practicing educators, such a book design may appear to be too theoretical, with too little straightforward instruction for action and implementation. For others, who focus primarily on academic research, the book design may lack theoretical depth, rigorous methodology sections, and comprehensive research agendas. While we recognize and sympathize with such critiques, which obviously have merit, particularly within the currently dominant thinking frameworks, we remain true to the choice of a multi-pronged strategy, which captures a diversity of voices, views, and experiences, as well as acknowledging the inherent complexities of social sustainability issues across different parts of the world. This suggests a plethora of research-informed pathways to practice or try out, while not prescribing a single practical or theoretical solution to be tested or explored further. Such a strategy enables real change through business education, and overcomes the complexities observed when embedding SDGs in business education (Azmat et al. 2023).

Often, business "*is taught as a technical discipline, with large doses of accounting, and without providing any understanding of how individuals, organizations, or societies think about relationships, commitments, and contracts*" (Chandra 2017, p. 159). However, as discussed in the first section, sustainability is a complex, multilevel, cross-disciplinary, wicked phenomenon that is hard to fit into a technical framework or accounting-type report, or into an orthodox, merely fact-based academic lecture. Moreover, social sustainability creates context for facts about environmental and economic dimensions, resulting in diverse social interpretations of them (Vallance et al. 2011). Therefore, some one-way-fits-all practical or theoretical frameworks for teaching social sustainability may not be perceived at all as relevant, good, or appropriate when taken to a different context.

Relevant philosophies or principles that help cherish diversity, well-being, human rights, and other social-sustainability-related issues, and examples of some potential ways to implement them in practice, may provide a more meaningful way forward. However, these philosophies or principles should not be taken as generalized theoretical explanations of education for social sustainability. The attempt to impose certain generalized, context-free theories about teaching social sustainability on HEIs and educators embedded in diverse societies would expose colonialist, ethnocentric, and supremacist rather than inclusive thinking. Such generalized and one-way-fits-all thinking is exactly the thinking that social-sustainability-oriented endeavors are intended to eradicate. As a result, in this book, by exposing HEIs, their leaders, and their faculty to a range of philosophies and principles, and demonstrating how they may be applied in practice within particular contexts, we enhance awareness and understanding of bringing social sustainability to business education, without limiting any further choices to innovate and foster social sustainability in ways that are applicable within the contexts in which business education takes place.

Furthermore, while we aim to encourage action towards creating educational settings for students to learn about social sustainability in business, with this book, we also aim to create theoretical foundations that can support educators in self-training, self-reflection, and self-development, necessary to create transformational faculty capable of educating for social change (Kovoor-Misra 2020). Social sustainability and quality education regarding it needs to be built through cross-disciplinary thinking that requires broad exposure (Azmat et al. 2023). Cross-disciplinary education is hard to foster if faculty in research-focused positions have no time or incentives to be exposed to business practice or issues beyond their narrow field; if

the teaching faculty do not consider deepening their knowledge by engaging in philosophical reflections or academic research; and if practitioners and their organizations are only visitors in business programs (Azmat et al. 2023; Chandra 2017; Syed et al. 2010). Social sustainability starts with HEIs that are able to cross the disciplines and dominant mental frameworks (Azmat et al. 2023; Chandra 2017; Syed et al. 2010) and rise up to role-model (Kovoor-Misra 2020) inclusivity for diverse organizational environments, demonstrating to (future) business professionals the principles, practices, and behaviors that need to be embedded in socially sustainable organizations (Šilenskytė and Rašković 2024).

To achieve this, educators ought never to cease learning, and always remain passionately curious, recognizing how important such approaches are for their capability to make a positive impact (Dieleman et al. 2022; Šilenskytė 2022). Yet, very few faculty members in HEIs have undergone further formal education after obtaining their highest university degrees, and even fewer have obtained or further deepened specialized pedagogy or andragogy, i.e., the method and practice of teaching adult learners, knowledge and skills. This book fulfills the needs for further development of faculty competencies, enabling positive change beyond the business classroom by exposing educators to a wide range of philosophical, theoretical, and practical approaches for engaging with social sustainability in business education.

The book also broadens educators' understanding that embedding diversity at various levels of education (Chandra 2017; Šilenskytė and Rašković 2024) reinforces social sustainability within and outside HEIs, and that such diversity in education can be effective for supporting the implementation of the SDGs emphasizing social sustainability. The life-long learning approach, not only for students, but also for educators, is likely to enable another important development – enhancing their ability to acknowledge human vulnerability and limitations, regardless of being academically trained to be rigorous and rational. If educators are the first to be comfortable showing the vulnerability, temporality, and limitations of their own thinking, research, and behavior, learners are likely to be encouraged to follow their lead (Kovoor-Misra 2020; Šilenskytė 2022). This will lay the foundations for addressing the wicked nature of sustainability problems (Van Tulder and Van Mil 2022) through purposeful agency and collective co-creation by diverse actors and through diverse perspectives.

### **3. The design and contributions of this book**

The handbook is designed to touch base with at least several issues within all three themes falling within the conceptualization of social sustainability, and all the SDGs that emphasize social sustainability (see previous sections). We recognize that the scope of issues falling within this conceptualization and these priorities is immense. Thus, instead of claiming that we comprehensively cover the issues representing social sustainability and SDGs emphasizing it, we suggest that this handbook rather opens up myriads of pathways to social sustainability, showing ways it could be studied, explored, and applied in business education. In this handbook, having coverage of issues within all of the social sustainability themes and all of the SDGs involved provides a comprehensive start.

Additionally, the book covers all three types of teaching innovations: (1) It provides research-informed insights on contemporary topics to be included as educational material. (2) It showcases how the newest technology can be adopted in teaching and educational program development. (3) It sheds light on how novel teaching philosophies and methods can be used, or how classical, theoretically elaborated teaching philosophies and methods can be applied in

novel ways, in order to address grand challenges (Dieleman et al. 2022). Even when discussing contemporary topic or technology applications in business education, the contributors to this handbook have discussed the philosophy or underlying assumptions behind them or behind their use, enabling reflections on the dominant ways of thinking about the issues discussed, and shedding light on different, thought-provoking perspectives and essential considerations that might have been overlooked in business and/or business education. This design of the handbook has supported us as we have showcased the complexity of social sustainability, going beyond the 'labels' and presenting various pathways to addressing social sustainability in business education.

We have taken a number of steps to ensure that both the theoretical and practical insights offered in this handbook are sensitive to the contexts of learners and HEIs, but also applicable beyond one specific geographical or administrative region, and therefore can achieve the desired impact. First, the contributors to the book are affiliated with institutions in all major geographical regions. While the geographical diversity of the contributors' current affiliations covers 22 countries (at least one in every major geographical region - South and North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Australia, and Oceania), their personal profiles and professional experience deepen the coverage of perspectives significantly (see note on contributors' bios). In the blind peer-review process conducted when developing this handbook, the contributors had a chance to read and evaluate each other's contributions, considering their application in different contexts, among other issues.

Moreover, the teaching topics and models featured in the handbook represent or involve more countries than those listed in Table 1, since many are designed for a broader social impact. For example, while the Interdisciplinary Global Classroom Model presented in Chapter 15 has been led by the faculty affiliated with an institution from the Global North, their teaching activities have reached or engaged and positively impacted various students and local communities in countries within Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The efforts to create a socially sustainable business education ecosystem, documented by the authors affiliated with the institution in the UAE, in fact represent activities carried out in the entire MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region.

The text of the contributions in the handbook is also framed in a specific way, to allow for inclusivity of diverse perspectives, geographically and otherwise. The contributions that introduce teaching models and activities start with the presentation of the underlying principles of their specific approach, employed to provide business education for social sustainability, and only then shift to the particular implementation of those principles within a specific context. Advice on how to adopt the discussed content and principles in specific lectures, courses, or sometimes HEI contexts, is offered together with a number of resources that can enable contextualized teaching innovations beyond those covered in this handbook. The contributions that focus on curriculum development offer research-informed insights that are applicable globally or regionally, but also provide location or context-specific examples showcasing how generalized insights can be applied to the context of the specific educational setting. Finally, the teaching cases, many of which are written based on primary data obtained from companies, invite comparative analysis in addition to exploring a specific theory or concept through the practical example depicted in the case.

Thus, while we do not cover all countries in the world, we have strived by various means to create the foundations for applying the insights from this handbook in any location, and to inspire teaching innovations beyond those described, in a way that will address specific, con-

textualized learners' and education providers' needs. Table 1 below summarizes all the contributions featured in the handbook and highlights their relationships with the above-analyzed conceptualizations.

**Table 1.** Contributions in this handbook evaluated against the themes of social sustainability and SDGs covered, and teaching innovation type

<b>Chapter in the handbook and its theme</b>	<b>Theme within conceptualization of social sustainability in business (based on Ajmal et al. (2018))</b>	<b>SDGs addressed in the chapter</b>	<b>Types of teaching innovations presented in the chapter (based on Dieleman et al (2022))</b>	<b>Geographical locations of contributors' current affiliations</b>
<b>Part 1: Emerging topics on social sustainability in business and ways to implant them in business education</b>				
Chapter 2: The circular economy's social dimensions: Implications for global strategic management teaching and practices	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, and 16	(1) Contemporary topics	Ukraine, Spain
Chapter 3: Human factors and ergonomics in business education	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDG 8	(1) Contemporary topics	Finland
Chapter 4: Social sustainability and advanced technology applications in business: Discussing AI and blockchain innovations within business education	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDG 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16	(1) Contemporary topics	Finland, Lithuania
<b>Part 2: Teaching thinking about and strategizing for social sustainability in business</b>				
Chapter 5: Teaching social impact measurement to enable socially savvy decisions in business	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDG 8, 10, 16	(3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	USA
Chapter 6: Teaching evaluating and developing nonmarket strategies to address social, political, and legal issues in business	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 12, 16, and 17	(1) Contemporary topic, (3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	Brazil, UK
Chapter 7: Teaching social sustainability through anti-narrative	(2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 7 and 12	(1) Contemporary topic, (2) Adoption of	Finland

imaginaries of energy cultures			new technology, (3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	
Chapter 8: Fostering awareness of social sustainability in digital business	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 9, 10, 12, and 16	(1) Contemporary topic, (2) Adoption of new technology, (3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	Finland, UAE, Mexico
Chapter 9: Designing a course for developing sustainability competencies	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 11, 12, and 13	(3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	Austria
<b>Part 3: Teaching cases on social sustainability in firms' vision, mission, and business model</b>				
Chapter 10: Geely: Achieving social sustainability goals through stakeholder participation	(3) <i>Community development</i>	SDG 8, 10, 11, and 12	(1) Contemporary topic introduced through a teaching case	Canada
Chapter 11: Democratization of energy in Africa: Social entrepreneurship for socio-economic sustainability	(2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 7, 10, and 11	(1) Contemporary topic introduced through a teaching case	UK
<b>Part 4: Teaching solving grand sustainable development challenges in business education</b>				
Chapter 12: Driving social sustainability through storytelling	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 12	(3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	New Zealand
Chapter 13: Creating social value through problem-based learning: Using podcasts in business education	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 2, 5, and 8	(3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	Peru
Chapter 14: Applied theater teaching model for addressing social sustainability in business education	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 3, 4, 5, 10	(3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	India, Slovenia

Chapter 15: Engaging management and STEM students in solving global problems of sustainable development	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 12, 16, 17	(3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	Canada
<b>Part 5: Education for diverse learners, intended to role-model socially sustainable practices and culture in business</b>				
Chapter 16: Learning to solve social sustainability problems in diverse student teams	(2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 5 and 10	(1) Contemporary topic, (3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	Poland
Chapter 17: Critical reflection analysis - A method for developing diversity awareness among (future) business leaders	(2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 5 and 10	(3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	Slovakia
Chapter 18: Gamification for teaching social responsibility in business schools	(2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 4, 10, and 12	(2) Adoption of new technology, (3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	UK
Chapter 19: Communicating sustainability through language differences with rich point pedagogy	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 1, 3, 5, 8, and 10	(1) Contemporary topic, (2) Adoption of new technology, (3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	US, Kazakhstan
Chapter 20: Teaching action research for social sustainability in the workplace	(2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 8	(1) Contemporary topic, (2) Adoption of new technology, (3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	Philippines
<b>Part 6: Teaching cases on managing organizations in a socially sustainable way</b>				
Chapter 21: Frankmann Automotive: Globally promoting diversity and inclusion	(2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 5, 8, and 10	(1) Contemporary topic introduced through a teaching case	Germany, South Africa

Chapter 22: Lympo: The complexity of responsible leadership in the emerging block-chain industry	(2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDG 10	(1) Contemporary topic introduced through a teaching case	Finland, Lithuania
Chapter 23: No smoke without fire? The tension between employee autonomy and employer authority	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDG 8	(1) Contemporary topic introduced through a teaching case	Finland
<b>Part 7: Developing a business curriculum and educational ecosystem that foster social sustainability in business and society</b>				
Chapter 24: Exploring the sustainability mindset for management education with a focus on social sustainability	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDG 4	(1) Contemporary topic	Slovenia, Peru
Chapter 25: Using the theory of planned behavior to develop business students into capable change agents for socially sustainable development	(2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 4, 8, 11, and 12	(3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	Australia
Chapter 26: Empowering the application of digital humanism for achieving inclusive business education	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 4 and 10	(2) Adoption of new technology, (3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	Austria
Chapter 27: University involvement in supporting entrepreneurship of people with disabilities	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 4 and 8	(3) Novel teaching philosophies and methods	Lithuania, UK
Chapter 28: Developing cases for teaching social sustainability in business: Lessons from the MENA region	(1) <i>Safety and security</i> , (2) <i>Learning and growth</i> , (3) <i>Community development</i>	SDGs 4	(1) Contemporary topic introduced through a teaching case	UAE

The contributions featured in the handbook can be used for research and teaching purposes in many ways. The next section elaborates on this.

#### 4. Ideas on how to use the handbook

The handbook may be used by the management of HEIs, managers of business programs, educators, or researchers, or all of them working together. We now briefly elaborate on how each segment of this target audience may benefit from reading the handbook and using it in their daily work.

For the management of HEIs, especially those providing education in business studies, this handbook is likely to enable reflections on the scope and depth of social sustainability in their organization and educational offerings. When reading this handbook, the managers of HEIs may consider reflecting on questions such as the following: To what extent does our HEI encourage the teaching of topics and methodologies that allow for the addressing of social sustainability within the HEI, and in the educational offerings it provides? How do incentive and work organization structures affect the possibility of embedding social sustainability within the educational offerings provided by our HEI? How do recruitment, appraisal, and training systems within the HEI affect the possibility of nurturing social sustainability in various ways within our HEI? How much do our educational offerings enable learners to solve grand challenges through the activities of the businesses in which they work or which they create during and after their studies? How is our HEI engaged in creating a socially sustainable educational ecosystem?

The contributions in this handbook may not provide direct answers to all of these questions, because only Part 7 directly, and even then only partly, reflects on the level of decisions taken by HEI management. Instead, the parts of the handbook that cover contributions on themes and educational settings that would support the addressing of social sustainability in business education, present examples that could be used to evaluate the possibility of executing such ideas within the context of a specific HEI setting. The innovations presented in this handbook may not spark innovations in an HEI, if the incentive or work arrangement structure is not ready to support them, or if the faculty cannot supplement or gain the necessary skills through external collaborations. For example, if an innovative educational setting requires cross-unit or cross-institutional collaboration, but such collaboration is not allowed or is constrained within a particular HEI; if the faculty need to structure a course around a specific project and the HEI system requires them to fit all the course work into a particular template indicating the hours of lectures to be completed; or if the topics for courses are strictly pre-defined in program descriptions and changing these approved educational plans would prove too burdensome for the faculty, then the faculty may find it very difficult to innovate or might face a double load of 'fighting' the system. Thus, by reading about and reflecting on the innovations presented in this handbook through the lens of their HEIs' structures, systems, and practices, the management of HEIs can become enablers of the changes needed to nurture social sustainability within their HEIs.

For managers of business programs, this handbook provides the opportunity to initiate discussion and actions for change within their faculty teams and with their superiors at the HEI. This handbook equips program managers with examples on how SDGs can be integrated into business education, and how business programs can address grand challenges, enabling their graduates to be change agents. Implementing the educational formats from this handbook, that are linked with the themes that need to be reported in evaluations provided to program and university accrediting bodies, will support managers in this part of their work, too.

For educators this handbook is a chamber full of new content and strategies that can empower them to create innovative educational experiences, enabling positive change. They may use this handbook to transform their educational approaches, to implement innovative (more engaging, with wider impact) course designs aimed at fostering social sustainability, and to enrich their lecture content and class engagement practices. As mentioned above, educators should not feel constrained to implement the topics and designs presented in the handbook. Instead, they could treat the contributions in this handbook as inspiration for their own innovations, within the context in which they teach. However, if educators need evidence and

support when ‘selling’ their innovative ideas to program or HEI management, and for getting approval to implement such unorthodox educational designs, this handbook can provide them with the evidence needed. The handbook is also intended to support faculty in skill development, particularly in pedagogy or andragogy competencies. Programs on adult education are not present in every location and this handbook fills this gap by introducing a wealth of materials about philosophies, principles, approaches, and tools for teaching in HEI context. Where programs on adult education are available, their content is often too theoretical and introduces only educational theories. In this handbook, educators will find explanations of how educational theory applies in practice, which will empower them to take immediate action for change.

When exploring this handbook, educators may realize that certain chapters are linked with and support each other. It is difficult to summarize all such synergies, but we will review at least a few of them. For example, Chapter 4, with insights on social sustainability when adopting advanced technologies in and for business, provides solid material for educational content that can be further enriched by implementing the experiential activities introduced in Chapter 8 or asking the students to solve the Lympo case presented in Chapter 22. An exploration of complex ideas about energy cultures and energy use in the context of social sustainability, as introduced in Chapter 7, could start with the solving of the hands-on primary-data-based case in Chapter 11. Insights on the circular economy and its principles, presented in Chapter 2, could be followed by an invitation to learners to design a social sustainability strategy in a specific context, as presented in the Geely case (Chapter 10). The teaching techniques and principles introduced in Part 5 and many of the insights in Part 7 would benefit any business course. Numerous innovative topics, insights, and themes to be addressed when nurturing social sustainability in business education can be found dispersed within the teaching cases (particularly the teaching notes of those cases) and in the contributions that shed light on teaching philosophies and methods. The chapters oriented towards discussing emerging themes on social sustainability also include some potential teaching activities. Therefore, educators would benefit most by exploring this handbook as a whole, because the issues covered within it are interconnected.

Last but not least, this handbook can be beneficial for researchers in business studies and those who conduct research on education. Already, when defining the aims of the book, we have underscored the scarcity of research on ways to address grand challenges, and that on embedding SDGs in business education. Without explicitly stating so, the chapters in Part 1 provide a research agenda for at least three large areas of research: (1) the circular economy and its social dimensions, (2) human factors/ergonomics in the strategic management of the firm, and (3) advanced technology adoption in business within the context of social sustainability. The introduction, and section 1 in particular, points to the need for work on enhancing the conceptualization of social sustainability in general, and in the context of business. The role of reporting social sustainability, given the complexities of its nature, is another fabulous and very wide area for research. Then, since this handbook encourages teaching about business that has social sustainability at its core, and in which social sustainability helps achieve a competitive advantage, research informing such education is needed. How many theories and business models have those assumptions, i.e., the assumptions that social sustainability is at the core of business and supports its competitiveness? Do we need such theorizations, and why or why not? These are potential research avenues to be explored, as many schools aim at developing research-informed education, and unless there is research available, educational content is unlikely to be expanded or improved.

For researchers working with the topic of (business) education, this handbook invites them to further reflect, and explore ways in which global priorities expressed through SDGs can be effectively embedded in business education, given the current institutional (regulatory, normative, and cognitive) frameworks present in various locations and globally. Also, as mentioned above, this handbook provides only a comprehensive start to researching social sustainability in business education, and therefore research directions in this regard are hard to count. Finally, given the importance of context when teaching social sustainability, this handbook invites reflection on how theorization about education that aims at developing the mindset, knowledge, and skills to enable social sustainability in business should be assessed. Do we accept that contextual contributions (i.e., those that show how general theory applies differently in different contexts) are sufficient in such research? Do we need rigorous methodology sections for such research and, if so, what specific evidence should we require to prove that teaching this topic in a specific way is effective? These and many questions are likely to emerge from the reading of this handbook, hopefully paving the way for further explorations.

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