

The Innovation Process in Education for Sustainable Business

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Abstract

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The experiences of three MBA-granting institutions in bringing innovation to the study of sustainable business are compared. All three organizations have been involved in the creation of business curricula that embed considerations of ecological systems, sustainable development, and social justice into standard business-school subjects. The Bainbridge Graduate Institute has come into existence as a free-standing graduate school of sustainable business. Presidio World College will open its doors as an affiliate of Alliant International University. The Evolutionary Development Group represents one of three academic streams of sustainability focus within the EGADE Business School of the Monterrey (Mexico) Institute of Technology. Differences in institutional setting are considered as factors that both support and hinder the development and deployment of innovative curriculum and programs. Institutional barriers and resources within traditional business programs are examined, as are challenges and opportunities for partnership and collaboration among *de novo* educational ventures.

Introduction

Business education plays a pivotal role in shaping the emerging global learning society and in bringing to the fore the economic and developmental value of human and social capital. Nevertheless, business education has traditionally failed to help business students achieve sufficient educational breadth, particularly with regard to their role and responsibility in an increasingly interconnected world that demands inter-personal, inter-cultural, and ethical sensitivity (Zlotkowski, 1996). In this day and age, an appreciative understanding of the social and environmental impact of business operations is crucial. Business education should prepare business executives who, in addition to doing things right, also know what are the right things to do.

If the leaders of the dominant institution of our time are narrowly focused on the greatest good for shareholders, we are headed for disaster. Business school students are aware in increasing numbers of this situation, and many have come to believe that business education itself is a contributing factor. In a recent study of students in 12 international business schools, "half of the students surveyed acknowledge that the priorities communicated during the MBA program may have been a contributing factor in corporate misconduct" (Aspen Institute Business and Society Program, 2003, p. 4).

This paper presents the experiences of three MBA-granting institutions in bringing innovation to the study of sustainable business. All three organizations have been involved in the creation of business curricula that embed considerations of ecological systems, sustainable development, and social justice into standard business-school subjects.

The three initiatives represent different forms of structural relationship to the existing academic establishment. Differences in institutional setting are considered as factors that both support and hinder the development and deployment of innovative curriculum and programs. Institutional barriers and resources within traditional business programs are examined, as are challenges and opportunities for partnership and collaboration among *de novo* educational ventures.

The Bainbridge Graduate Institute (BGI) has come into existence as a free-standing graduate school of sustainable business. Presidio World College (PWC) will

open its doors as an affiliate of Alliant International University. The Evolutionary Development Group of EGADE (EDGE) represents one of three academic streams of sustainability focus within EGADE, the business school of the Monterrey (Mexico) Institute of Technology.

Bainbridge Graduate Institute

Bainbridge Graduate Institute is dedicated to bringing environmental and social responsibility (ESR) into the warp and woof of business education. The mission of Bainbridge Graduate Institute is to prepare leaders from diverse backgrounds to achieve environmentally and socially responsible business success. Our method is not only to work with our own students directly, but also to support other business schools in bringing a broad definition of responsibility into the heart of their programs.

We approach this mission in several ways. We act as a pilot program that creates and shares curriculum and materials. We are demonstrating the demand for this kind of education and its marketability. And we are providing opportunities for faculty from other schools to teach at BGI, where they can devote significant attention to a rich set of sustainability considerations, without the academic and political constraints often imposed in their home institutions.

Rick Bunch, Director of Business Education at World Resources Institute's Sustainable Enterprise Program said this about BGI's model program:

BGI's new MBA program in Sustainable Business Practice is unique in the MBA world and on the leading edge of a wave that will soon break. BGI's program incorporates precisely the training in sustainability and environmental stewardship that WRI's *Beyond Grey Pinstripes* report has identified as missing from most business school curricula. (Bunch, 2003)

Our institutional form: an independent graduate school

BGI is a freestanding graduate school, authorized by the State of Washington to grant the MBA degree. BGI launched its first class in September of 2002, making it the first operating business school focused on integrating sustainability, social justice, and business success.

We chose not to affiliate with another school in order to have the maximum freedom to design a program that incorporates sustainability into every course. In an undertaking as innovative as creating a new kind of business education, one experiments, makes mistakes, learns and tries again. We did not want to have to justify our experiments in advance, nor have to stop to explain when we wanted to change our approach. We believe our freedom will allow the maximum rate of learning about how to teach an MBA that fully incorporates environmental and social responsibility.

Our experience suggests that there is merit in having at least one independent school such as ours working on creating a model sustainable MBA program. Our move from initial concept in January of 2002 to operational status in September of the same year would not have been possible under the aegis of an existing institution. Professors in other schools tell us of the difficulties imposed by faculty committees and academic politics. We have made mistakes and been pleased with our ability to change as soon as we believed we saw a better way.

Partnerships

It is not clear where the boundary is between partnership and friendship, but our success generally comes through partners and friends. We collaborate, when possible, with other schools, institutes, associations, and companies. We treasure our partnership with Presidio World College, which involves open sharing of what is working and what is not. We share faculty and refer students to each other. Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) has been a great supporter, contributing Amory Lovins' time for teaching and advising. We have volunteered on RMI projects in both Europe and the US. We are exploring guest faculty possibilities with our friends at EGADE.

Beyond academia, our students and faculty often come to us through our connections with or membership in organizations such as Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE), GreenBiz.com, SustainableBusiness.com, Positive Futures Network, Social Venture Network, and the Whidbey Institute. We draw from thought leaders in many communities including corporate leaders, environmental educators and activists, sustainable business academics, entrepreneurs, intrapreneurs, organizational consultants and change agents, scientists, and technologists.

The challenges of developing an integrated curriculum

For most of the core courses of the MBA curriculum, good textbooks that both teach the basics and give sustainability and social responsibility a central role do not exist. There are some good syllabi, but these are generally not tuned to our students' values and our method of delivery. It is not hard to find great faculty in core subjects who are passionate about sustainability and social responsibility. But for the most part they have not been allowed to bring these values into the way they teach in their more traditional business schools, and so the curriculum has never formally been developed.

Creating curriculum for a sustainable and socially responsible MBA program is largest challenge we face and the core of our mission. We are endeavoring to enhance the approach of standard business school courses by bringing in relevant sustainability perspectives subject by subject. For example, our study of supply chain management includes not only how to reduce inventory and cut costs through closer relations with suppliers, but also techniques to ensure sustainable practices and social responsibility in the entire value creation chain. We also are creating new courses, including *Introduction to Environmentally & Socially Responsible Business; Economics, Sustainability & Human Welfare; Creativity & Right Livelihood; and Sustainability, Community & Social Justice*.

We are learning to work closely with faculty to create the appropriate courses and course materials and adapt their methods to our combination of intensive face-to-face sessions and distance learning. Our students meet with faculty for three residential sessions totaling ten days each term. The rest of our program is conducted with a combination of reading, writing, teleconference, and online conversation. Students post homework to our secure web site, where faculty and other students can read and engage in conversation about the work. The student body for the most part moves together as a learning community through a preset sequence of courses. The BGI MBA program can be completed over a period of two years or three years.

Catalyst, our main online software environment, works well for some of our students. However, for others the conversation becomes so compelling that they spend too much of their limited time in dialog and fall behind in their homework. For others, the online dialog is boring, and they participate only sporadically, focusing exclusively on

reading and submitting assignments. We are seeking to learn how to make online dialog both more entertaining and more focused on the core learning of the courses. We will also be experimenting with new modalities such as MP3s.

Sourcing and development of faculty

We seek faculty through our partners and networks. Finding faculty who want to teach in a sustainable MBA program is not difficult. Helping them to teach in a program that only meets face to face three times during the term is more challenging.

Many traditional business schools have resisted attempts to bring ESR into the core business education curriculum. BGI invites visiting professors to create and deliver these courses in a supportive environment with students who are willing to participate in the process. We find that faculty from other schools teaching at BGI develop and take home with them new skills and a new sense of the possible. As Mark Anielski of the University of Alberta put it:

My own experience in teaching the economics program at BGI has enlivened my teaching of corporate social responsibility at the University of Alberta's School of Business. (Anielski, 2003)

One of the major lessons we have learned is to use the stars of the sustainability movement as guest speakers, while using people with strong academic qualifications who are used to teaching the basics of the subject as lead faculty—putting courses together and holding primary teaching responsibility. We have learned the hard way that when we use movement heroes as lead faculty, students learn to critique the presuppositions and limitations of a given discipline, but may not thoroughly learn the fundamentals of the subject. Our present approach of supplementing academic lead faculty with guest appearances by well-known figures allows us to access many superb teachers with significant real life experience.

The market for sustainable business degrees

Business school students polled in 2002 expressed a strong interest in seeing more consideration of social responsibility in core courses (Aspen Institute Business and Society Program, 2003). We have done some informal (but highly motivated!) research

on the market for sustainable business degrees. We have found keen interest in certain industries such as health food, and across industries in departmental areas such as environment, health and safety. Broadly, employers appear to value MBAs regardless of the concentration or specialization. We believe our students will benefit from this generalized appreciation of the degree.

The majority of our students are getting an MBA for reasons other than the benefit of employability conferred by the degree itself. They believe that the knowledge, not the degree, will be most helpful in achieving their aims. This is not surprising when you consider that over half of our students either are or plan to be entrepreneurs or are already working for an ESR enterprise or in a sustainability-related function with a more mainstream employer. We believe there is a large opportunity space for entrepreneurs who want their work to reflect their values.

BGI's students reflect a number of key market segments. They include innovators who want to promote sustainability initiatives inside existing organizations as well as committed environmental entrepreneurs who want to be more effective in starting and running their own ESR businesses. Some BGI graduates will put their ESR business knowledge to work in government agencies and NGOs. Current students include the chairman of a public utility, present and former senior sustainability managers at Hewlett Packard and Shell, successful entrepreneurs, the founders of the world's leading co-housing company, engineers, a documentary film-maker, and a fascinating variety of other professionals, activists, and business people.

Managing the institutional hurdles

The founders of BGI began working on creating a sustainable business school in January of 2002. We launched our first class in September of 2002 with 20 students. We received authorization to call what we were doing an MBA program in November of that year.

We decided on the rapid launch of a pilot program to speed up the learning process. We told our students that they would be part of a pilot and play a major role in shaping the program. We didn't claim we knew how to do it. Students self-selected for our program if their passions included a desire to play an important part in creating a new

program that had a chance to help shape the future of business education. In leveling with our students, we turned our weakness as beginners into a strength.

We have lost some potential students because we do not yet have accreditation. This has been particularly noticeable with respect to our ineligibility to participate in the federal student loan guarantee program. We have referred applicants we could not serve to PWC.

BGI spent almost a year obtaining authorization from the Higher Education Coordinating Board of the State of Washington to offer the MBA degree. The process was painfully slow, but we benefited from going through it. The staff was clear on the hurdles we had to clear and always seemed to be offering useful advice and hoping we would succeed. The state Board is presently reviewing our first major curriculum revision, which reflects our first year's experience and defines the offering that will be launched with our second group of students beginning in the Fall of 2003.

EGADE

EGADE is the Graduate School of Business Administration and Leadership at the Monterrey Campus of the Tecnológico de Monterrey (ITESM) in Mexico. ITESM is a nationwide multi-campus private university system that was founded in 1953 with an entrepreneurial and business spirit to serve the city of Monterrey, which even then was emerging as the industrial hub of Mexico. The main Monterrey Campus has 17,000 students, at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

The business school has been operating since the late 1960s, but it is only in the last six years that it has consolidated itself as the leading business school in Latin America. EGADE is accredited by SACS (The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools), the AACSB International (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business), and EQUIS (European Quality Improvement System of the European Foundation for Management Development). EGADE has been ranked as the number one business school in Latin America by the magazine *América Economía* (a Dow Jones Group publication), and the British *Financial Times* journal positioned EGADE among the 100 top business schools in the world. The Aspen Institute and the World Resources Institute ranked EGADE in the top 15% of MBA programs in the world addressing issues

of social innovation and sustainable development. And yet, there remains a lot to be done. The effort to appear on the map of world class business schools has meant that EGADE has dedicated much effort to meeting a set of externally established criteria determined by ranking organizations and accrediting institutions that tend to exclude sustainability concerns.

The Monterrey Campus of ITESM is currently engaged in a campaign to become a “sustainable campus.” However, the infrastructure and culture of the university tend to favor image over efficiency, and the campaign lacks a strong and consistent educational component that would permeate both the academic and non-academic activities of the university. The result is a focus on eco-efficiency (involving little more than narrowly targeted initiatives concerning waste and energy management), but no focus on inculcating a culture of sustainability (which would involve creative innovation in a context of recognized dynamic interdependence and mutuality). This applies equally to EGADE, which is housed in one of the newest—but still non-sustainable—buildings of the entire university system.

EGADE faces the same challenge as most business schools in the world: to engage in a dynamic and ongoing exploration of the purposes and means of graduate business education in order to respond to the rapidly changing needs of business and society. Because EGADE is located in Mexico and serves primarily the Latin American market, the specifics of this challenge for EGADE are rooted in the social, economic, political, and environmental conditions of this developing region of the world.

Integrating sustainability into the MBA curriculum

Sustainability integration at EGADE has proceeded along two major lines—faculty interest groups and curriculum development.

EGADE sustainability interest groups

The fact that EGADE ranked in the top 15% business schools addressing social innovation and sustainable development was not the result of a comprehensive and deliberate strategy to move in this direction, but rather of isolated efforts by particular faculty members.

There are three main faculty interest groups addressing issues of sustainability at EGADE. One is concerned with sustainability from an economic perspective, focusing on strategies that lead to more efficient companies. Another focuses on the technological and product life cycle aspects of sustainability. The third looks at the issue of development *per se*, considering it to be a mode of human evolution that operates at the socio-cultural level and exploring its dimensions in terms of business activity that affects human, social, and/or environmental capital. Although these three groups rarely interact or cross-fertilize ideas, they are not in competition with each other and are generally mutually supportive.

The last of the three faculty interest groups mentioned above is called EDGE—the Evolutionary Development Group of EGADE. EDGE self-organized in 2001 as a research group focused on the development of human, social and environmental capital. EDGE undertakes research that serves to understand, generate, and apply knowledge grounded in the new sciences (e.g., chaos and complexity theory and evolutionary systems perspectives) in order to promote development strategies that address the needs and aspirations of whole persons, societies, and ecosystems. The research outcomes of EDGE are applied within the university as well as in communities and organizations through a strong partnership with the international nonprofit organization Syntony Quest (<http://www.syntonyquest.org>).

The work of EDGE remains peripheral to the activities of EGADE. The philosophical, theoretical, and methodological foundations of its work are remarkably distinct from those that underpin the rest of EGADE or ITESM as a whole. But even so, the business school has created the space for such an integral exploration to occur. As a research group of the university, EDGE has generated significant internationally arbitered publications, one of which won a prize offered by the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland, for Social Innovation and Sustainable Development; the prize-winning paper (Laszlo & Laszlo, 2002) explores the role of knowledge management in ethical social innovation. Currently, the group is preparing a special issue of the international journal *World Futures* dedicated to the theme of Evolutionary Development.

MBA curriculum

The MBA of EGADE is a traditional program with no explicit focus on sustainability. The only exception is the requirement that all the students at ITESM,

including EGADE's MBA students, take the core course called *Leadership for Sustainable Development*. However, the MBA program is the only one that gives students the option of substituting for this course a seminar on business ethics that does not cover sustainability topics. In other words, MBA students either take a sustainable development course *or* a business ethics course—as if these were two separate issues. (It is worth noting that ever since this option was instituted a few years ago, the vast majority of students have chosen the business ethics course over the one on sustainable development.)

Any other content related to sustainability in business is the result of individual efforts by faculty who integrate what they perceive to be relevant topics in the traditional curriculum. This has been the approach taken by two faculty members and researchers of EDGE who have redesigned the content of one required MBA course as well as designed two optional courses in order to expand the choices for students interested in social and environmental responsibility.

In its original design, the required MBA course *Strategy, Structure and Processes of Organization* did not include any sustainability concerns. This course has been redesigned to include a systems perspective and to address issues of corporate citizenship and the triple bottom line (relating to concomitant financial, social, and environmental gains). The new course *Organizational Learning and Development* is being offered as an elective that looks at change management and organizational learning in a macro-business context where sustainability is seen as both a challenge and an opportunity. And most recently, the new elective *The 3 S's of SucceSS: Strategy, Systems, Sustainability* has applied a Project Oriented Learning (POL) methodology to guide students in the redefinition of success in light of the needs of a real world company seeking to become successful by focusing on issues of sustainability. In the first two terms during which this course was offered, students and professors worked with a Mexican company in the recycling business, the link to which was provided by the New Ventures project of the World Resources Institute's Sustainable Enterprise Program.

As of this writing, an integrated curriculum for EGADE's MBA program is not yet a priority. The energy of the school as a whole serves to maintain its reputation and recognition as a world class mainstream business school.

In and of itself, EGADE does not offer distance learning courses. ITESM has its own Virtual University, and the MBA program, as well as all the other graduate and undergraduate programs, have been adapted so as to be offered in either online or satellite broadcast versions to complement the traditional face-to-face classroom option. The Virtual University seeks to reach areas of Mexico and Latin America where quality higher education is not readily accessible.

Partnerships

EGADE, as well as ITESM as a whole, have numerous academic partnerships and alliances with universities the world over. However, the purpose of these partnerships is primarily for the internationalization of both students and faculty—not for research or teaching collaborations concerned with sustainability in business. It is therefore by and large informally that faculty members develop their international professional networks and collaborate with colleagues whose work enriches and complements their efforts to incorporate research and learning on sustainability in their professional activity.

Sourcing and development of faculty

Research is a key activity for the development of EGADE. There are external and internal pressures for faculty to conduct research in their areas of specialization, including such subjects as strategy, marketing, finance, service management, evolutionary development, product life cycle development, and educational innovation, to name but a few. EGADE has reached a comfortable equilibrium in the current number and diversity of its faculty, with its seventy-seven faculty members coming from various parts of the world, including Chile, Colombia, Germany, Peru, Switzerland, the USA, and of course, Mexico.

The market for sustainable business degrees

From the experience of teaching Executive MBA students, we gather that Mexican companies generally perceive the notion of “sustainable business” as an oxymoron. The Mexican market for sustainable business degrees is almost nonexistent. Using the framework of the Industry Sustainability Learning Curve (in Nattrass & Altomare, 1999, p. 16), which describes the evolution of corporate responses in the US

from unprepared (before the 1970s), to reactive (in the 1970s), to anticipatory (in the 1980s), to proactive (in the 1990s), to high integration (in the 2000s), we would say that most Mexican companies are still in the unprepared phase. That is, they tend to demonstrate a lag of 30 years or more with regard to current leading edge business practice in the US: by and large, they are totally unaware of sustainability issues—or are reactive to imposed regulatory standards. At least the Executive MBA students who take the courses described above move progressively into anticipatory (e.g., cost avoidance and competitive edge) and proactive (e.g., eco-efficiency and strategic environmental management) predispositions. Unfortunately, these predisposition have little staying power and instead tend to be damped out by the inertia and resistance to change that these students face in their day-to-day work. And yet, a small percentage of each class tends to defy these damping pressures and move with the ideas and approaches they learn in order to bring greater degrees of sustainability to their work environments. It is these students who inspire and motivate the faculty members who teach the business courses on sustainability to keep at it!

Managing the institutional hurdles

EGADE has a tremendous opportunity to become recognized as a business school making a significant contribution in the area of business sustainability. The efforts to maintain and surpass the mainstream standards and recognitions achieved in the past will continue. But the reputation already gained also provides degrees of freedom to invest more in an area with high relevance and potential impact for the development of Mexico and Latin America. EGADE's ranking by the Aspen Institute and the World Resources Institute will continue to be an important external motivation to strengthen and expand the nucleus of research and teaching activities related to sustainable development.

Presidio World College

One of the marks of a truly dominant intellectual paradigm is the difficulty people have in even imagining an alternative view. Allen (1993)

Over the past three years, a group of business leaders, educators and social change enthusiasts came together to explore what would be needed to provide a holistic and well-

balanced business education. We considered what current MBA programs were offering and we noticed a significant gap. At that time we began to put together a program that could better equip current and future business leaders to sustain people, the planet and profits. During the development process, we identified several main themes that helped guide our progress.

We felt the degree would have to be an MBA—to provide a credential for the world as it is today. Though we explored the idea of instituting an MA in Sustainable Management, we strongly believe that the perspective of sustainability needs to be integrated within the existing business paradigm, not outside of it. We felt the program also would need to be accredited in order to provide students with the option of federal financial aid.

We wanted the degree to reflect the “both/and” world of management education. Students need traditional skills *and* new ways of thinking and acting about business, particularly as there are increasing signs that the old ways are becoming less effective. Students need to find meaning in their work *and* they need to find jobs and start organizations in the world as it is today. We see business as a powerful force for social change *and*, simultaneously, we see how many corporations wreak havoc within and upon the human and natural world. In short, we see that in order to help develop a new generation of business leaders, we need education that can address multiplicity and complexity, not be limited by dichotomous “either/or” approaches.

We knew that the degree would need to appeal to employers and we were glad to hear that employers were beginning to speak out about what they needed from new MBA hires. Management consultancy Arthur D. Little surveyed the Fortune 500 CEOs on sustainability and found that 95% say sustainability is important to their future, but less than 30% say they have the people and know-how to meet the challenge (Hedstrom, Poltorzycki & Strob, 1998). At the 2002 Bell Conference, the panel representing public, private and not-for-profit employers consistently agreed that the number one quality sought in new MBAs is good communication skills—emotional intelligence, relational abilities, and a positive attitude. To be sure, the traditional MBA skills remain important, but they were not named first by these representatives of the employment sector.

Listening to graduates was an important part of our research. We learned that MBA graduates report that “effective communication is the most useful skill in their careers ... but only 6% of business schools are even moderately effective in teaching it” (The Economist, 2002). The *Beyond Grey Pinstripes* report also confirmed that MBA students want integration of social and environmental issues into the core MBA curriculum, not add-ons or electives (Aspen Institute for Social Innovation through Business & World Resources Institute, 2001).

We expected that we would need to develop the degree out of a new program rather than try to establish these concepts within an existing program, because faculty who seek to develop skills in sustainable management are sometimes marginalized and face institutional barriers to change. While corporate CEOs, MBA graduates, and current students see the value of such sustainable management skills, business school curricula are not quickly and easily changed to meet these new perceptions or expectations.

We wanted to offer a degree that would be flexible, the best of “bricks and clicks,” through a combination of face-to-face and online learning. Most importantly, we saw the need for the degree experience to unfold within a learning community. In order to make change in business consciousness, graduates will need the support and innovation of a vibrant learning cohort. Such a community can also more closely mimic the real-life business world of teamwork and collaboration.

Approach to Integration

Simply adding social welfare to our [business] research agenda...will not address the deep challenge that faces researchers and practitioners alike. That challenge...lies in constructing a management philosophy that *integrates* social and economic objectives. (Walsh, Weber, & Margolis, 2003)

PWC has taken a four-pronged approach to integrating sustainability into the MBA curriculum. First, there is the development and inclusion of new courses like *Principles of Sustainable Management* and *The Human Dimension of Leadership*. These core courses will cover new ground and provide innovative ways of considering traditional business material. Secondly, the more traditional MBA core courses need to integrate sustainability into the course syllabi. This task has been made easier by WRI's

compilation of socially- and environmentally-oriented management study cases. Third, the integration of social and environmental consciousness into the traditional MBA curriculum will occur by engaging faculty who embody these principles. This challenges us to find faculty who not only bring excellence in teaching but also live with the tension of bringing sustainability into their lives. Fourth, PWC plans to provide a quasi-faculty position of “Integrator” to the MBA educational process. The role of the Integrator is to participate throughout the face-to-face and online coursework, providing a perspective on the “whole” of the educational experience that is typically only viewed by students. The Integrator will help develop the learning community and build the container for the work and growth of the program.

Partnerships

In order to launch a new program, PWC had to find an accredited, sponsoring institution willing to trust in a new curriculum and faculty. Alliant International University signed an agreement to offer an MBA in Sustainable Management through PWC in June 2002. Since that time, PWC has enjoyed the benefits of being associated with a long-established and accredited business program that has encouraged us to be bold in implementing our vision for sustainable management.

No new school starts without a tremendous amount of goodwill and supportive relationships. Our program has been fortunate to include a large team of advisors and partnering institutions. PWC has also been blessed with less formal but vitally important partnerships with like-minded institutions. There is no better example of this partnership than our work with the team at Bainbridge Graduate Institute. From the first day we met last July at the BELL Conference, their support, wisdom and teamwork in this movement to bring sustainable management into mainstream business education has been inspiring. Hunter Lovins and Walter Link have been instrumental in bringing top-notch experience to our faculty and curriculum committee. Additionally, PWC has an informal relationship with several faculty at EGADE. Together with Alliant’s supportive guidance, we are now on the verge of launching the program.

Surprises

The number of students for whom this type of program resonates does not surprise us, but it is encouraging to see the mix of students who have applied thus far. Unlike the vast majority of MBA programs that tend to be populated predominantly by men, PWC seems to be attracting equal numbers of men and women. Also, a significant proportion of students admitted have not applied to other MBA programs; they report that while they need the skills of an MBA, they did not feel like they would fit into the traditional programs. This early feedback suggests that an MBA in Sustainable Management may actually increase the pool of MBA candidates rather than compete only for students planning a more mainstream business education.

There was an expectation that students interested in sustainable management might be older than the students applying to the more traditional programs, but this has not proven to be the case so far. Many applicants are still in their twenties and are enthusiastic about the concentration in sustainable management.

One less pleasant surprise has been the difficulty of raising money to launch this program in the post-9/11 and post-dot.com world. PWC's loyal and committed Board of Directors has done everything possible to mitigate the effects of this challenging environment for fundraising.

Key Lessons

In choosing a middle road between starting PWC completely on our own without accreditation or institutional support and starting PWC as a program embedded within an existing business school culture, we have learned some lessons along the way, of which three stand out in particular.

Time and patience are essential for working to develop a healthy affiliation with a supporting institution. It took us roughly one year to establish our relationship with Alliant International University and another year to complete the substantive change process with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Though these processes have gone relatively smoothly, it has meant we have had a longer lead-time before the arrival of our first revenue-producing student!

Trust and hope have been essential to our path. There have been countless times that a suspicious or pessimistic team would have walked away from the challenge of starting a new MBA program. Being present to our doubts and fears, without indulging them, has brought us to the brink of launching our program this Fall.

Self-reflection has helped us to better model the principles of sustainable management within the PWC team. Each of us carries, for better and for worse, life experience within the current business climate and consciousness. As we strive to be sustainable ourselves, there is a humbling degree to which we are still not even close to our ideals. We have needed to lovingly examine how we perpetuate some of the very same unsustainable practices that we seek to change through our curriculum. We see this process of self-reflection and caring support as crucial to our success, as we will expect nothing less of our expanded learning community of faculty and students. We expect that engaging duality with multiplicity will continue to challenge us as we explore new ways of thinking and acting in business.

Conclusion

The authors of this paper share a belief that the transformation of business education will require initiatives of many different types and degrees of connection to mainstream business schools. We need innovative programs inside existing business schools such as EGADE. We need innovative accredited schools like Presidio World College that are sheltered by existing schools and yet have the freedom to create an integrated sustainable curriculum. And finally, we need independent start-ups like BGI that have the greatest possible freedom to experiment with the creation of business programs for those who march to the beat of a different drummer. In addition, we need collaboration across these different models, each sharing their learning and curriculum with the others so that we can co-evolve as rapidly as possible.

Our three institutions have marked differences in culture, configuration, and experience. We believe that it is precisely these differences that make the three business schools so complementary. Students, administration, and faculty of these institutions can mutually benefit and support each other in generating greater impact in the evolution of business through business education in service of sustainability.

In spite of the mounting social, environmental, and economic reasons for changing the way the world does business, change itself is difficult. Conditions in the world today require us not only to change the way the world thinks about business, but to change the way that each one of us thinks about business. This joint paper represents an important effort among like-minded institutions and people. We hope our collaboration and competition will continue to coexist in service of an emerging holistic and sustainable education in environmentally and socially responsible business.

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