

Ethics, CSR and sustainability should have greater prominence in business schools' curricula

Business schools should adopt a stakeholder rather than a shareholder approach to their curriculum with more coverage of sustainability, corporate social responsibility and business ethics, new research reveals.

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According to a report from the Research & Consultancy Centre at the Association of MBAs, in partnership with Durham Business School, 79% of business schools agreed that to a large or very large extent this should be the case.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, when many of today's corporate leaders were studying for their MBA, concerns about business ethics and sustainability played little part in the curriculum.

Mirroring the shift for greater transparency and accountability in business today, eight out of 10 (83%) of alumni surveyed agreed that ethics have become important or very important, while three-quarters (75%) said that corporate governance is now important or very important. And 80% of business schools agreed to a large or very large extent that corporate social responsibility should underpin the actions of organisations.

When asked how the MBA could better prepare students post-downturn, almost one half (46%) of the respondents raised issues relating to sustainability or ethics.

The research included a total of 100 business schools as well as 544 alumni from 57 countries across the world. In terms of their roles and responsibilities, half of the alumni were senior managers or above, with almost a tenth at CEO/president level.

Commenting on the findings, Rob Dixon, dean of Durham Business School, said: "The economic crisis has shown that we can't simply expect things to go on as they were. It's not just all about profit. Business schools are helping to build a new way of doing business, one that doesn't put the interests of shareholders above all other stakeholders.

"Business needs well-rounded executives with strong leadership skills and the ability to integrate ethical, sustainable and stakeholder thinking into their management decisions."

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