

# RELEVANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE “BUSINESS SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT” COMPETENCE IN VITORIA-GASTEIZ BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION DEGREE<sup>†</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The Bologna Process in Higher Education has brought important changes in European universities over recent years. At the Vitoria-Gasteiz Business School, we have faced the challenge of designing and developing a new degree.

Within this process, the definition of the degree competences emerged as one of the more complex tasks, being the management of the business social and environmental dimensions, identified as Business Sustainable Management (BSM), one of the competences of the new degree.

At the same time, in recent years, the companies' concern over the management effects on the available resources has been growing, and has set the agenda of numerous social and economic agents.

However, we believe that this concern has not been adequately reflected in the design of the degrees more closely linked to business management. Specifically, in the Business Administration degrees offered by Spanish universities, BSM has generally been excluded from the competences of the degree. On the contrary, the BSM competence has been set up as a central aspect when designing and implementing the Degree at the Vitoria-Gasteiz Business School.

Despite the existence of a common definition of sustainability concept (WCED, 1987), there is not a clear definition of BS that can be used in BMA degrees, because the definition of SD is so generic that has led to many interpretations (over 300 different explanatory definitions), in general, different from its genuine meaning.

Notwithstanding this, we believe that it is not possible to develop effectively a competence if there is not an agreed definition of it. Hence, we believed it to be necessary to start analysing the BSM competence through two principal tools: (a) analysing the evolution of student's perceptions of this competence (b) analysing the school lecturer's perceptions on this topic, as they will be the responsible of the development and evaluation of this competence.

In this context, the aim of this study is twofold:

- Analyze student's perceptions on the level of relevance and the level of development of the BSM competence in the BMA Degree by comparing the influence that the design of the new degree has had on these perceptions and, the evolution of those perceptions from a longitudinal point of view.
- Analyze School lecturer's perceptions and opinions about different possible BS definitions (taking into account a previous revision of the literature) through interviews, where the lecturers will ask to consider points relating to BSM concept and to its application as a transversal competence in the teaching of their subject.

For the analysis of the students we have relied on the relevance-performance analysis as a strategic tool in higher education (O'Neill, M. A. et al., 2004; Ford, J. B. et al., 1999....), in order to check the impact of the introduction of the BMA Degree on the perception of the students of the relevance and development of the BSM competence.

Using content analysis, descriptive analysis and regression analysis (non-parametric test among others), we can conclude that the introduction of the new degree has contributed to reducing (approximately by a third) the gap between the perceived relevance and the actual level of development of the BSM competence in the degree.

For the analysis of the School lecturers we analyze the factors that should be considered within the concept of BS used in the definition of competence to use at Vitoria-Gasteiz Business School, due to the different approaches that can be made to the concept, through a survey.

We can conclude that the different sustainability dimensions indicated in the survey seem to cover the whole spectrum of approaches that may be related to business sustainability, as only one lecturer indicated an additional approach to those established in that survey.