

The Future of Sustainability Education: A Multidisciplinary, Student-Centered Approach

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This review examines a groundbreaking educational guide, the Sustainable Economics Teacher's Manual designed to integrate sustainability into higher education curricula across diverse disciplines. The book presents an interdisciplinary framework spanning economics, law, engineering, medicine, arts, and social sciences, emphasizing sustainability as a unifying lens rather than a standalone subject. Structured into 14 thematic units, the content combines theoretical knowledge with practical, student-centered activities. It promotes interactive learning through case studies, debates, and simulations while integrating multimedia resources. The book aligns with emerging educational trends like blended learning, flipped classrooms, and gamification. This book offers a forward-thinking blueprint for sustainability education, preparing students to become proactive agents of change in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

The Sustainable Economics Teacher's (Holczinger – Sárvári, 2025a) Manual presents an ambitious and innovative approach to integrating sustainability into the higher education curriculum, bridging disciplinary gaps and fostering the interdisciplinary thinking that is essential to address the multiple challenges of sustainable development. The book is not just an educational guide, but a comprehensive roadmap for embedding sustainability across disciplines, reflecting the paradigm shift in economics and education.

The central theme of the book is the recognition that sustainability cannot be limited to environmental or economic studies. The authors argue for an integrative approach in which sustainability becomes a common, interdisciplinary framework that spans law, engineering, medicine, arts and social sciences. This approach emphasises that sustainability is not an isolated field, but an integrating issue through which all disciplines can contribute to a common effort towards a more sustainable future.

The volume also sensitively addresses issues of measuring economic performance. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was born after the Great Depression, in the era

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of mass industrial production, and is the most appropriate measure of this. It measures material wealth and well-being, i.e. the flow of materials and goods. It is not for nothing that Stiglitz wrote that “What we measure affects what we do: if we measure the wrong thing, we will do the wrong thing. If we focus only on material wellbeing – on, say, the production of goods, rather than on health, education, and the environment – we become distorted in the same way that these measures are distorted; we become more materialistic.” (Stiglitz, 2018). But GDP does not measure well digital services, the sharing and platform economy, innovation, income distribution, household work, free labour, and utility. Finally, it does not measure at all the state of the environment, health, marital status, mental health, freedom, self-fulfilment and happiness.

Demography is also a prominent theme in the volume. A growing population is a major burden on the planet, as the biocapacity of 1,7 Earths could provide enough resources to meet the needs of humanity today. Infinite growth is therefore questionable, and if we don’t change, we could risk our current level of development. “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (UN, 1987 “Brundtland Report”). GDP is a standard measure of a country’s economic performance, but it does not cover all aspects of social well-being. The EU supports the development and use of measures beyond GDP, including environmental and social indicators of well-being.

As an indication of the high importance of this issue, the European Commission is working to develop sustainable and inclusive well-being indicators to complement GDP, tracking progress towards well-being for current and future generations and even allowing the EU’s sustainability transition to be analysed in a global comparison (European Commission, 2023). The EU’s goal is to achieve climate neutrality and sustainability by 2050. Successful sustainability reform will limit the existential risks of climate and environmental crisis while strengthening the EU’s economic security. As the EU accounts for only 6,9% of greenhouse gas emissions and around 5% of the world’s population, global cooperation will be key to achieving the targets. Many emerging and developing countries face more challenges in reducing carbon emissions, despite their exposure to growing climate threats. They are also critical of the EU’s green transition initiative, which is why an EU approach based on a partnership of equals is the only way forward.

A European Green Deal for sustainable development will empower people to successfully participate in and benefit from the transition. However, climate change will affect areas unequally and will disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable. Low-income households will be the most vulnerable to higher food or energy prices, as they spend proportionately more on basic goods such as food, electricity, gas, heating and transport compared to other groups. In regions and cities facing economic stagnation and decline, there is growing dissatisfaction with widening gaps in education, job opportunities, social mobility, equality, life expectancy. At the same time, the growing concentration of wealth is significantly higher than income inequality, directly hampering equal opportunities. In addition,

the effects of climate change may also have a direct impact on inflation dynamics, so that rising food or energy prices coupled with a decline in purchasing power may further exacerbate inequalities, as their impact differs significantly between low- and high-income households. These deepening problems cannot be solved without knowledge of sustainability and measurement of sustainable GDP.

The analysis of economic, social and environmental issues of sustainability is gaining ground in both domestic and international higher education. International research shows that higher education has a significant positive impact on regional economic sustainability. The higher the level of urbanisation and market-oriented environment, the greater the positive impact of higher education on economic sustainability (Li and Kang, 2025). The knowledge of this sustainable development is not limited to finance and economics education but is an integral part of the education of all disciplines. Optimising the structure of higher education also involves serving the sustainable development of regional economies. In addition to research and education on sustainability issues, a multidisciplinary approach will also contribute to strengthening Hungary's competitiveness.

The book embodies the multidisciplinary principle by dividing its content into 14 thematic units, each of which has been carefully designed by the authors to balance theoretical knowledge with practical, student-centred learning activities.

One of the most commendable features of the book is its structured, user-friendly format. Each thematic unit is divided into lecture and seminar sections, with learning objectives aligned to competency-based outcomes. Detailed outlines of lesson, suggested timetables and a variety of interactive exercises ensure that instructors can seamlessly integrate the content into existing courses or use it as the basis for entirely new courses. This flexibility makes the book a valuable resource for curricular innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The book also emphasises active learning and student engagement, moving beyond traditional lecture-based teaching. It encourages instructors to promote discussions and collaborative projects, fostering students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Incorporating case studies, simulations and structured group activities enriches the learning experience, promoting a deeper understanding of the practical implications of sustainability. Particularly noteworthy is the book's emphasis on learner reflection and self-assessment, supported by comprehensive questions and recommended reading that allow learners to monitor their own progress.

The integration of technology is another valuable element. The book includes a wide collection of QR codes for up-to-date data, visual aids and inspiring video content. This ensures that the teaching materials remain up-to-date and engaging, supporting teachers in delivering lessons. By harnessing digital resources, the book embodies the modern school and teaching ethos of adaptability and continuous improvement.

Through group exercises and simulations, the book transforms sustainable business into a tangible experience, demonstrating that environmental awareness is not only an individual responsibility but also a shared duty towards future generations. Solving environmental problems requires cooperation and collective

efforts to preserve the Earth as a liveable place for posterity. The Earth's limited resources, the depletion of energy resources, the loss of natural habitats and biodiversity loss all show that we need to manage carefully the resources that are still available, contributing to the preservation of the natural environment and a sustainable future. Furthermore, environmental awareness has a direct impact on human health. Air and water pollution can be a source of many diseases. A healthier lifestyle can benefit from sustainable transport, clean energy sources and environmentally friendly food consumption.

A highlight of the book is the use of gamification to stimulate student activity, increase motivation and promote a deeper learning experience. In addition to case studies and simulations, the book proposes educational games that allow students to experiment with different economic and sustainability strategies. This kind of experiential learning develops strategic thinking while putting the lessons learned into a real-life context.

Collaborative learning not only enhances communication and collaboration between students but also engages students from different backgrounds and perspectives in joint problem solving. This approach not only reflects the interdisciplinary nature of sustainability but also supports the development of soft skills such as communication, teamwork and critical thinking, which are increasingly expected in the labour market.

The work of Baksay, Matolcsy and Virág – in particular their textbook “New Economics for Sustainability” – lends the book academic rigour and credibility. The transformation of this core material into a practical teaching guide demonstrates a thoughtful balance between theory and application, ensuring that complex economic concepts are accessible and actionable for students across disciplines.

The book is also a testament to the institutional leadership of sustainability education (Deák – Sárvári, 2023). The venture, supported by Budapest Metropolitan University and the Green Programme of the Magyar Nemzeti Bank (the central bank of Hungary), demonstrates a strong commitment to promoting sustainability not only as an academic concept, but as a practical, achievable priority (Papp – Sárvári – Varga, 2022a, 2022b). The book's alignment with the university's strategic vision and its wider contribution to national and international sustainability efforts underlines the fundamental role of higher education institutions in promoting systemic change.

In higher education, sustainability is still part of the curricula of a few subjects, but as we face a multidisciplinary approach, it is gradually becoming an integral part of all subjects. As with the bachelor program on the circular economy (University of Pannonia), the curriculum also offers the possibility of starting a basic course. The curricula include economic, environmental and social sustainability, measurement of well-being, digitalisation, green finance and taxation, and digital central banking, among others. The Sustainable Economics Teacher's Manual is a great help for teachers and students in higher education in building a sustainable future and improving the international competitiveness of the domestic economy.

The book's commitment to promoting a community of practice among educators is commendable. It actively encourages collaboration and feedback, prompting

educators to share their insights and contribute to the continuous development of complementary teaching materials. This collective, iterative approach (Bartalos – Sárvári, 2025; Holczinger – Sárvári, 2025b) ensures that content is always responsive to emerging challenges and evolving pedagogical needs.

From a broader educational and societal perspective, the publication of this book is particularly timely. It is in line with international trends that emphasise the role of education in promoting sustainability literacy and preparing future leaders to address pressing global challenges (Sárvári, 2022a, 2022b). The book's multidimensional approach – combining economics, environmental science, social equity and cultural awareness – reflects the interconnected nature of sustainability issues, prepares students to address them holistically and encourages new research (Sárvári, 2024).

In summary, this book is an exemplary resource that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries and offers educators a solid, adaptable framework for embedding sustainability in education. Its thoughtful structure, interactive pedagogy, technological integration and collaborative spirit make it an outstanding contribution to sustainability education. By equipping students with the knowledge, skills and mindsets necessary to actively contribute to a sustainable future, the book fulfils its mission of shaping the next generation of change agents. It is not just an educational guide – it is a call for educators and students alike to contribute together to a sustainable and equitable future. ■

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