

Teaching the circular economy in business schools is essential for our planet's survival

Submitted by: BlueSky Public Relations Ltd

Tuesday, 29 September 2020

Our planet's natural resources are under enormous pressure that must be quickly reduced, and it has become increasingly apparent that business schools have a key role to play in instigating real change when it comes to the climate.

A shocking 90% of the raw materials that we use are not reinjected into the economy, which is why the circular economy concept has generated a great deal of enthusiasm from various sectors over the last few years.

Aurélien Acquier and Valentina Carbone, ESCP professors and Scientific Co-Directors of the ESCP - Deloitte Circular Economy & Business Sustainable Models Chair, have developed their educational approach to increase awareness among ESCP students on the complexity of climate and environmental issues and point to the role of companies, regulations and technologies.

"The circular economy concept tends to polarise supporters of green growth and those of degrowth. As business school professors, we navigate between these extreme positions to offer a third way" say Professors Acquier and Carbone.

"Our approach has three distinctive features. First, each edition of the course is built around a particular sector and presents different actors' views on the subject, including private companies, regulators and consumers. We then adopt a multidisciplinary approach, bringing together different fields of management – strategy, operations, marketing, finance – but also including debates at a more philosophical level.

Finally, we seek to combine this reflexive approach with one that is orientated towards innovation and action. In order to achieve this, our course partners, at least one institutional actor and one or more companies, provide our students innovation-related problems."

Over a period of ten weeks, students analyse the different facets of a given problem, help entrepreneurs make strategic or operational choices, conduct international comparisons relating to a circular economy issue, or question the regulatory approach adopted by a state or a local authority. In addition to this analysis, students propose solutions to address the limits of linear, unsustainable models.

This unique educational innovation is backed up by the ESCP-Deloitte Circular Economy chair. Given the collective and multidisciplinary nature of Circular Economy issues, this initiative is also a call to open business schools up beyond their classic disciplines and skills. This is paramount to collectively changing our ways towards a more sustainable future.

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