

HABILITATION THESIS

SUSTENABILITY: MULTIPLE AND COMPLEMENTARY PERSPECTIVES IN THE CONTEXT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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SUMMARY

There is a consensus that the topic of sustainability and sustainable development has gained momentum in recent years and represents a priority for many governments and well established international organizations. In this context, both academia and private actors play a fundamental role in terms of educating and training new generations in this respect, as well as conducting fundamental and applied research aimed at finding sustainable development solutions, i.e. developing sustainable development strategies and policies at the level of society, organizations and individuals. In the context of unprecedented social, economic and environmental challenges, public authorities aim at developing policies and implementing regulations that encourage sustainable development and responsible behaviour of public and private actors, while empowering citizens and businesses to find solutions to the most pressing problems they face. At the same time, various studies suggest that younger generations highly value the social and environmentally ethical behaviour of business, and that this perception has a significant influence on both their consumption and career decisions. All these trends will reshape the business practices of traditional enterprises, which will have to integrate sustainability into their everyday business, while also offering new perspectives for emerging social enterprises.

The present habilitation thesis, entitled "Sustainability: multiple and complementary perspectives in the context of business administration" presents in the first part the scientific interests and achievements after the completion of doctoral studies, directly or indirectly related to the broad field of sustainability and sustainable development, analysed from diverse and complementary perspectives. These professional, scientific and academic achievements resulted in numerous publications, elaborated in collaboration with colleagues from the country and abroad: books and book chapters, articles published in prestigious academic journals, as well as papers presented at international conferences, most of which were subsequently published in the conference ISI proceedings. These scientific papers include six articles published after the completion of doctoral studies in ISI-indexed journals with an absolute influence score (AIS) greater than zero, as well as books, book chapters and papers presented at ISI Proceedings indexed conferences, which complement them, all of them included and presented in this habilitation thesis. The research methods used are complex, both qualitative and quantitative, based on primary and/or secondary data, depending on the specificity of each research. The habilitation thesis also makes reference to the various projects where I conducted multiple researches, worked in national and international research groups or coordinated teams, experiences that strengthened my research skills, autonomy, teamwork, coordination and mentoring skills.

Based on the aforementioned research outputs, two main research directions can be identified, each with several thematic sub-areas.

Thus, a first direction of research is in the area of sustainable and responsible human resource management, in order to develop policies and strategies with long-term impact for the different stakeholders involved (universities, companies where internships are carried out and future employers of students, civil society, etc.), which facilitate the transition from school to active working life, enabling a better integration of graduates on the labour market. Therefore, two of the articles published in ISI indexed journals included in this paper address the topic of internships, by conducting both a bibliometric analysis aimed at mapping the research interests in the field and an empirical analysis, based on primary data, which has as main objective to identify and analyse the multiple factors that influence the quality of internships. In the same thematic area of sustainable management of human resources, two other ISI articles deal with the motivation and engagement of employees at the workplace and of students in the educational process based on modern technologies. A high level of motivation and involvement is generally based on a high-performing, sustainable and strategically oriented human resource management system and leads to better individual and organizational performance and results. The articles integrated in this habilitation thesis explore on the one hand student motivation and engagement in gamified learning and on the other hand the mediating role of entrepreneurial leadership in the relationship between organizational culture and work engagement.

The second major research direction lies in the field of (social) entrepreneurship and social responsibility, as it is perceived in our country by the different actors involved: from the university to the representatives of generation Z, who are associated with an attitude that shows concern for the environment and the ethical and moral aspects of organizations. This thematic area is of particular importance, especially in the current socio-economic context, where efforts are being made both at the public policy level (promoting green energies, ESG sustainability reporting systems, stimulating the development of businesses with social and environmental impact, etc.) and at the organizational level (promoting social responsibility and integrating sustainability in the whole business value chain - from sustainable procurement and production to sustainable marketing and communication, and HR strategies that place the employee and his/her needs in a central position). Three sub-themes underpinning the publications integrated in this habilitation thesis can be identified in this context: the social responsibility of universities, social entrepreneurship and the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in difficult socio-economic times and the attitude of young people, representatives of generation Z towards energy efficiency and the decarbonization process through modern solutions.

These two main research directions, presented above, are closely thematically linked to the teaching activity, which consists on the one hand in lectures and seminars in the field of Human Resource

Management and Leadership (mainly Bachelor's and Master's programs at the German and English sections of the Faculty of Business Administration in Foreign Languages - FABIZ) and on the other hand in the field of Social Entrepreneurship (Bachelor's programs at the German and English sections of FABIZ). This facilitates the transfer of state-of-the-art knowledge and results from the research areas to the students within the various teaching activities.

In the second part of the habilitation thesis the focus shifts to professional, scientific and academic career development plans. In this section my professional evolution is briefly presented, followed by the presentation of my current research interests, most of them carried out in the framework of research projects in international teams, and of the career development, focusing on the consolidation and expansion of ongoing research, also structured by thematic directions and concrete future actions. A projection into the future is also presented both in terms of teaching activities and administrative responsibilities at the university.