

UNIVERSITY OF SEVILLE

European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation
A.Y. 2022/2023

**Mind the Gap:
Incorporating Human Rights Into the Curricula of Undergraduate
Business degrees**

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Word Count Declaration: 24,007

Any future business education programme, whether set in a local or global context, must contain the language and action of social justice, human rights, community economics and ethics. The revolution is for business schools to become places where our personal values and economic interests intersect.

Anita Roddick, Founder of The Body Shop International

Abstract

Business and Human Rights education can potentially provide future business leaders the tools to fulfil their responsibilities towards society, thereby strengthening the protection of human rights and the environment. Notwithstanding, the lack of BHR education in Business schools at the undergraduate level is a missed opportunity to frame the students' perspectives on business within a human rights and environmental lens from the start of their education. As such, this research aims to discuss the need of having BHR education in undergraduate Business degrees, as well as to characterise its current practice and analyse its ideal practice. To achieve this goal, the author carried out 15 semi-structured interviews with BHR experts followed by a qualitative analysis of eight undergraduate BHR-related course syllabi and the data collected in the interviews. The study found there is a consensus regarding the optimal learning outcomes, main topics and teaching methods. The optimal incorporation of BHR in the curricula would be a specialised compulsory BHR course together with the integration of BHR education across the curriculum. This requires a concerted effort from the educational committee. The successful integration of BHR at the undergraduate level could pave the way to more responsible business leaders in the future.

Keywords: Business and Human Rights, Human Rights Education, Business schools, education, teaching.

Acknowledgements

To all the Professors that led me into wanting to have an effect on other people's lives as they had in mine. Without them, the inspiration for this thesis would never have existed.

To Professor Claire Bright, for having introduced me to the field of Business and Human Rights, therefore shedding light on my purpose of bringing these two worlds closer together.

To my supervisor Professor Carmen Márquez-Carrasco, for having believed in me and in this project, for repeatedly reassuring me I was going in the right way, and for her efforts as EMA National Director in guaranteeing me and my colleagues had a prosperous time in Sevilla. To her and my co-supervisor Laura Garcia Martin, for having contributed to this research with their time and insights.

To Berit Knaak, Leonard Feld, Terry Nelidov, and Professors Ali Awni, Anthony Ewing, Bjorn FASTERLING, Claire Bright, Elizabeth Umlas, Florian Wettstein, John Ferguson, Judith Schrempf-Stirling, Karin Buhmann, Lara Bianchi, and Rachel Chambers, for the kindness and generosity of having shared their opinions and experiences with me. I can gladly say I have seen the network of passionate BHR academics in practice, and I believe the passion and the spirit of cooperation I witnessed to be quite unmatched in the academic world.

To Professor Orla Ní Cheallacháin, Programme Director of the EMA Programme, for making me realise I did not have to do this Master, I got to do this Master. This thought was crucial to help me maintain a consistent gratitude mindset throughout the months in which I wrote this thesis. To her and to all the EMA staff and Academic Team for their hard work in running this very special Programme.

And now, to all the people that, even though not being Professors, have taught me equally important life lessons.

To my sister, my first teacher, who I heard speaking about addition and subtraction accounts while still on a baby chair, for being my personal and academic role model and for always reminding me that academic research has its tough moments, but more often than not they lead to important breakthroughs.

To Milena, for helping with the brainstorming of ideas at a critical time and for showing me the academic world can be about collaboration rather than competitiveness.

To the EMA class of 2022/ 2023, for all the memories I will cherish forever. This Master's programme has been an unforgettable experience and I could not be more grateful for all the inspiring individuals I met and for everything I learnt, inside and outside of the classroom. A special thank you note goes to Ana, Jordan, and Marta, for their support and encouragement during the writing period.

To my friends back at home, for reminding me that true friendship is the most beautiful bond one can have and that what's essential always remains intact in the distance.

To João, for consistently helping me put things into perspective and for making every day seem a bit brighter.

To Emily, Fede, Georgia, Leo, Ryan, and Shirin, for making Sevilla feel like home and giving me something to look for after my days spent writing at the Felipe González Márquez library.

To my grandmother Belmira and my aunts Celeste and Fernanda, for their unwavering love and for celebrating all my wins as their own.

And a special thank you note goes to the people who have taught me the most in my life - my parents. For always prioritising my education, for the unconditional support and faith in me and in my work, and for having listened to me speak endlessly about this project. You are probably mini Business and Human Rights experts by now. I hope this thesis makes you proud.

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List of abbreviations

AACSB - Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business

AMBA - Association of MBAs

BOP - Base of the Pyramid

BSR - BSR ®: Sustainable Business Network and Consultancy

BHR - Business and Human Rights

CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility

ECOSOC - United Nations Economic and Social Council

EQUIS - EFMD Quality Improvement System

EU - European Union

GBSN - Global Business School Network

HOTS - Higher-Order Thinking Skills

ILO - International Labour Organization

LOTS - Lower-Order Thinking Skills

MBA - Master of Business Administration

MHREDD - Mandatory Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence

MNCs - Multinational Corporations

NYU - New York University

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PRME - Principles for Responsible Management Education

SRSG - Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises

UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UN - United Nations

UNGPs - United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

USA - United States of America

Introduction

The time when companies could avoid embedding human rights in their organisation is long gone. Complex human rights challenges are increasingly intrinsic to international business and, with soft law initiatives such as the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) being more and more turned into hard law, companies will not be able to evade their internationally recognised responsibility to protect human rights. For humanity's sake, corporate governance structures will have to start shifting from shareholder-focused to stakeholder-focused in order for companies to better play the value-creation role they are supposed to in society. But 'to move away from business as usual, [there is the] need to radically reimagine the business school as usual. And this means more than pious murmurings about Corporate Social Responsibility' (Parker, 2018). It means educating on Business and Human Rights.

As Nelson Mandela said, 'education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'. If one wants to change business practice into one that better respects human rights and the environment, providing BHR education to Business school's students is key. After all, 'students pursuing management and professional education today will become tomorrow's business leaders' (UN Global Compact, n.d., p. 1) and, as business leaders, they will end up being in the position to influence and have a direct impact in corporate operations. Therefore, Business schools have an important role to play in equipping their students with the increased awareness of the adverse impacts their decisions might have, as well as with the skills and the general and technical knowledge of human rights issues for them to be able to autonomously manage human rights challenges. If students take these learnings into their professional lives, BHR education has the potential to help business leaders and companies fulfil their responsibilities towards society, thereby strengthening the protection of human rights and the environment.

Notwithstanding, the uptake of BHR education in Business schools has been, so far, tremendously slow, mainly due to human rights not being perceived as a priority by Programme Directors. There is still much advocacy work to be done to show that human rights have a place in business and, consequently, in Business schools' curricula. Undergraduate students, term which refers to students who are studying for a Bachelor's degree in Business, regardless of studying in the European Higher Education System or in a liberal arts and sciences system such as the American one, need to acquire relevant

knowledge and skills to become responsible business leaders. Even though one can find some BHR courses or already existing courses where BHR thematics are incorporated, they tend to be elective and be treated as an isolated matter, while shareholder value and profit maximisation theories are repeated in all the other disciplines across the hall. As such, BHR is often seen as an additional consideration, instead of a lens that should be used across business functions and operations.

Goals and Scope

In this context, the main goal of this research is to, firstly, discuss the importance of BHR education in Business schools, specifying its importance at the undergraduate level, as well as to characterise the current practice of BHR education in undergraduate Business degrees, and to discuss how it could be implemented in an ideal scenario. The two research questions that seek to be answered are (i) ‘What is the current practice concerning Business and Human Rights education in undergraduate Business degrees?’ and (ii) ‘Ideally, how should the implementation of Business and Human Rights education in undergraduate Business degrees be carried out?’.

The rich collection of expert interviews, as well as examples from the current practice at the undergraduate level, enabled us to set a foundation of how BHR Education would ideally be present in undergraduate Business curricula. For that purpose, firstly, we will establish the need for BHR to be incorporated across the undergraduate Business curriculum, rather than being treated as an isolated subject, such that students develop a systemic thinking of business practice through a human rights lens. Secondly, we will argue that BHR stand-alone courses or already existing courses where BHR modules are included should be compulsory, to guarantee that all future business leaders have contact with the framework of BHR during their studies. Thirdly, we will provide systematised suggestions regarding learning outcomes, teaching methods, and course content for BHR courses or modules. Lastly, we will analyse some challenges that Professors trying to advance the agenda of BHR education in Business schools face and recommendations to overcome them.

It is worth noting that, due to time limitations, no programme directors, students or potential employers were interviewed. Moreover, the sample of Business schools considered is not representative of the total population of Business schools, neither in terms of the engagement in BHR Education nor in geographical terms. It was a conscious methodological choice to only select Business schools engaged in BHR education at the undergraduate level

because it would not be possible to draw out examples of BHR Education at undergraduate level from schools that do not have it in place. Concerning the geographical scope of the research, Professors from different regions of the world were contacted, but mostly only Professors teaching in Europe or the USA were interviewed or provided the necessary data on their courses. As such, the sample of undergraduate programmes ended up being very concentrated in these regions, with five of the selected Business schools being located in Europe, three of which in the United Kingdom, two in the USA and the other in Egypt. Another research limitation is that a thorough discussion on the information contained in the course syllabi alongside other questions was not possible within the time of the interview. As such, it was not possible to fully know how the analysed syllabi are translated in practice in the classroom.

Even though there is ‘an increasing literature base for Human Rights education’ (Tibbitts & Kirchsclaeger, 2010, p. 21), few focuses on BHR education in particular. Previous research regarding BHR education has been done, but no published research has focused particularly on highlighting the importance of undergraduate BHR education. Furthermore, no previous research has done a characterisation of BHR-related courses or systematically present the opinions of one of the key stakeholders of BHR education - the Professors - of how BHR education could be further advanced, neither at the graduate level nor at the undergraduate level.

Methodology

The methodology adopted is a two-step methodology, divided into data collection and data analysis. To perform the data collection, interviews were chosen as a research method to canvas the views of a range of experts who approach the topic of BHR education in Business schools from their unique perspectives. The form of semi-structured interviews was adopted due to its flexibility, allowing for the researcher to adapt the style and sequence of questions and inquire about topics that were not originally predicted in accordance with the dynamics of the conversation. The interviewees¹ were selected based on their engagement in projects

¹ The interviewees were, by alphabetical order, Ali Awni (School of Business of the American University of Cairo), Anthony Ewing (Columbia Law School), Berit Knaak (Geneva School of Economics and Management), Bjorn FASTERLING (EDHEC Business School), Claire Bright (NOVA School of Law), Elizabeth Umlas (Interdisciplinary Institute of Ethics and Human Rights of the Université de Fribourg), Florian Wettstein (Institute for Business Ethics of the University of St. Gallen), John Ferguson (University of St. Andrews School of Management), Judith Schrempf-Stirling (Geneva School of Economics and Management), Karin Buhmann (Copenhagen Business School and University of Southern Denmark Business School), Lara Bianchi (Nottingham University Business School), Leonard Feld (Danish Institute for Human Rights and Centre for Law, Sustainability & Justice of the University of Southern Denmark), Rachel Chambers (Faculty of Business

related to BHR teaching, namely, the tool kit ‘The Case for Human Rights in Business Education – A Tool Kit’² and the Teaching Business and Human Rights Forum, and were contacted by email. 34 people were contacted, of which 22 responded, having the response rate been 64.7%. From these, more than two thirds accepted to be interviewed. 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with BHR experts from different countries, from which ten currently teach BHR-related courses in Business schools, five of which at the undergraduate level. Most of the interviews were conducted through Zoom between April and June 2023, except for Professor Karin Buhmann’s, whose answers were sent by email. The interviews were conducted in English and had an average duration of 45 minutes. All of the interviewees were informed about the context, goal, and scope of the research and told that their interview would be recorded, transcribed, and used for the purposes of the research. The quotations included in the thesis were sent to the interviewees for review. Most of the interviewees verified the quotations and consented their responses being attributed to them. The quotes of the interviewees that did not verify their quotes on time of the thesis submission were anonymised.

In accordance with the research questions, the interviewees were asked about the current and ideal practice of BHR education in undergraduate Business degrees through an engagement with the following key points: (i) the importance of BHR education in Business schools in general, and, particularly, at the undergraduate level, (ii) the learning outcomes, course content, teaching methods, and compulsoriness of BHR courses or modules, (iii) the possibility of the stand-alone BHR course approach being complemented by mainstreaming BHR education in the traditional core courses of undergraduate Business degrees; and (iv) the challenges Professors trying to push the BHR education agenda may face and some ideas on how to overcome them. In interviews to Professors teaching BHR-related courses at the undergraduate level, some additional information or clarifications to the data collected through the Google forms or their School’s institutional website were asked.

The data on the BHR-related courses and the course syllabi were collected through a Google Forms³, sent to all the Professors that participated in ‘The Case for Human Rights in Business education – A Tool Kit’ at the end of March. The questions in the forms referred to the BHR-related courses these Professors teach and asked them to upload their BHR-related courses’ syllabi. As the data collection was done in a very early stage of the research, the data

Law of the University of Connecticut), Terry Nelidov (Erb Institute of the University of Michigan), and one contributor who requested to remain anonymous.

² Available at https://www.unige.ch/gsem/files/2016/0553/3021/TOOLKIT_15.11.pdf.

³ The questions asked in the Google Forms are presented in Annex 1.

collected was relative to both graduate and undergraduate courses. However, after the research questions were narrowed down, only the data relative to courses that take place at the undergraduate level was analysed in the context of this thesis. In the case of five out of seven schools where the undergraduate BHR-related courses are taught, there was an interview with the Professor teaching those courses.

On the second stage of the research, a qualitative analysis of the course syllabi and data collected through semi-structured interviews and Google Forms was carried out in order to obtain insights empirically, which were complemented with desk-based research.

The data collected through the analysis of course syllabi and interviews was subject of a thematic analysis and compiled in text form. According to Creswell (2014), a thematic analysis is ‘a systematic process for coding data in which specific statements are analysed and categorised into themes that represent the phenomenon of interest’. As such, differences and similarities between course syllabi and the opinions of the interviewees were identified in order to be able to provide answers for the research questions. The quotations of the interviewees included in this thesis were selected due to their aptness to represent the range of points of view that were expressed in the set of interviews. As for the analysis procedure of the syllabi, a careful document screening was carried out, followed by data standardisation into categories defined based on the thematic analysis. Graphical representations of the categorised data were also made, as well as the interpretation of the results.

Structure

This thesis is structured in three chapters. The first chapter begins by laying out the theoretical dimensions for the urgent need of BHR education in undergraduate Business degrees. For such, the reader is provided with a brief overview on the evolution of the field of BHR and, as a consequence, of BHR education, particularly at Business schools, highlighting the influence of specific factors that are contributing to its advancement. This chapter concludes with an analysis of the role of BHR education in Business schools and why it should not be left to the graduate level.

The second chapter focuses on the first research question. It consists of a qualitative study which analysed the curricula and syllabi of undergraduate BHR-related courses offered by seven Business schools in order to identify how BHR education plays a role in these curricula and provide a non-exhaustive characterisation of the current practice of BHR education at undergraduate level.

The final chapter analyses data collected in the experts' interviews to provide an answer to the second research question. It addresses how to improve the implementation of BHR education at the undergraduate level regarding the incorporation of BHR education across the curriculum and the compulsoriness of BHR courses, and it synthesises ideas on the desired learning outcomes, teaching methods, and course content of such courses. The challenges Professors trying to push the BHR education agenda may face are also analysed, as well as recommendations to overcome them. The second and third chapters have similar subsections in order to better compare the current practice to what was identified by the interviewees as the ideal practice.

Chapter 1

The role of Business and Human Rights education in Business schools

The following chapter seeks to provide an explanation for the relevance of Business students, in particular, undergraduate Business students, to have BHR education during their studies. To understand the role BHR education might play in the future, it is important for the reader to understand the developments happening in the BHR field itself, which are intrinsically connected to the *raison d'être* of BHR education. Afterwards, some contextual considerations on the incorporation of BHR education in Business schools are presented. Building on those considerations, the reader is provided with an analysis of the role of BHR education in Business schools, and why leaving BHR Education to the graduate level constitutes a missed opportunity.

Evolution of the field of Business and Human Rights

Being economically and politically more powerful than many States, corporations are considered by many the most dominant force in the world - for both good and bad.⁴ As the current economic model 'shamelessly rewards exploitation and destruction with gargantuan profits' (Saller, 2020), companies frequently overlook or inadequately address the negative human rights and environmental impacts of their operations in favour of the short-term gains for their shareholders (Pacheco, 2021). As such, many business operations taking place across the globe in complex supply chains are at the origin of social and environmental disasters, the most famous of them all being the climate crisis. When it comes to human rights, businesses can have a direct and immediate impact on them, either through their own operations or the ones of its supply chain partners. This impact has the potential to be positive, through contributing to economic growth and creating employment, but can also be extremely negative, for instance, by not guaranteeing safe labour conditions and decent living wages, using forced and/or child labour, disregarding the needs of indigenous people, emitting massive quantities of greenhouse gases, reinforcing dictatorial or autocratic regimes, and contaminating lands and rivers who are crucial to secure livelihoods, *inter alia*. In a complex and structurally inequal world like ours, these challenges are not easy to address.

⁴ Back in 2018, 69% of the entities on the Top 100 of Economic Actors were already multinational corporations (MNCs). This data was taken from a direct comparison of the annual revenue of corporations (source: Fortune Global 500 2017) and the annual revenue of countries (source: CIA World Factbook 2017). Retrieved from <https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/news/2018/oct/17/69-richest-100-entities-planet-are-corporations-not-governments-figures-show>.

BHR is an evolving interdisciplinary area of practice and research at the convergence of many disciplines - mainly business, law, and public policy - which, in very broad terms, delves into this interrelation between business activities and human rights impacts, and how companies may fulfil their responsibility to respect human rights. The latter has been outlined in the authoritative document of the field of Business and Human Rights - the United Nations Guiding Principles on Human Rights (UNGPs)⁵.

BHR has emerged out of the recognition by the international community regarding the role of non-state actors, such as business entities, in the protection of human rights, in line with the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)⁶, that mentions that ‘every organ of society’ should strive for the observance of the Declaration and the respect for the rights and freedoms laid out in it. This debate was triggered by Chile’s initiative within the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to adopt a resolution for the creation of a group ‘to study the role and effects of multinational companies in the development process, particularly in developing countries, and their implications for international relations’ (Resolution 1721 (LIII), 1972). The initiative led to a series of developments at UN-level that culminated with the adoption of a Program of Action on the Establishment of a New Economic Order by the UN General Assembly⁷ and the creation of the UN Centre on Transnational Corporations⁸ and the Intergovernmental Commission on Transnational Corporations⁹ in 1974. One of the main tasks of the UNCTC was to draft an international legal instrument to regulate the activities of transnational corporations, which turned out to never be adopted due to the lack of agreement on its legal nature.

In 1999, a working group set up by the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights started the second attempt of drafting a Code of Conduct for Transnational Corporations, which was named Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with regard to Human Rights (more known as ‘Draft Norms’). However, these Norms were once again not approved by the UN Commission on Human Rights due to the reluctance of some States concerning the impact of the approval of the Norms in their economic growth. However, even though not formally approved, these Norms still shaped the BHR discourse and influenced subsequent developments of the field.

⁵ Adopted by Resolution A/HRC/RES/17/4 and available at https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinessshr_en.pdf.

⁶ Available at <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/03/udhr.pdf>.

⁷ Available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/218451#record-files-collapse-header>.

⁸ Created by Resolution 1908 (LVII), 2nd of August 1974 of ECOSOC.

⁹ Created by Resolution 1913 (LVII), 5th of December 1974 of ECOSOC.

In the same year, at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum at Davos, the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan proposed to business leaders that they create a compact of shared values. This was in the origin of the UN Global Compact¹⁰, an initiative that calls companies to ‘align strategies and operations with universal principles on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption’ (UN Global Compact, n.d.). This Compact may be seen as a first step on the adoption of a voluntary approach in the creation of a human rights framework for business activities. There is no remedy mechanism associated with the initiative and the only sanction companies may face when acting unaligned with the 10 principles is to see their name removed from the list of signatories.

Professor John Ruggie, who was the primary author of the UN Global Compact, was nominated in 2005 as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises (SRSG). Under his two mandates¹¹, John Ruggie started to develop a set of principles following a different approach than the one followed when drafting the Norms, that, in his view, had taken ‘existing state-based human rights instruments and simply [asserted] that many of their provisions [were now] binding on corporations as well’ (Ruggie, 2006) and had not differentiated clearly the human rights responsibilities of States and corporations. The set of principles he prepared, named ‘United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights’ (UNGPs), was unanimously endorsed in 2011 by the UN Human Rights Council.

The UNGPs implement the UN Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework¹² developed by John Ruggie during his first mandate, which is based on three pillars: (i) the State duty to protect human rights, (ii) the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and (iii) access to remedy for affected rights holders. Following years of multi stakeholder consultations, the UNGPs managed to provide guidelines for the different but complementary human rights-related duties and responsibilities from States and companies in a shared language that suited both business practitioners and human rights actors. They also allowed to establish a general consensus on the elements that characterise the corporate responsibility to respect human rights. In particular, the need for companies to be attentive to international human rights standards and to self-regulate when the text or enforcement of domestic laws is insufficient to adequately protect the people and the planet (UN Human Rights Council, 2008). The key concept of corporate responsibility to respect human rights used in the

¹⁰ See more at <https://unglobalcompact.org/>.

¹¹ Set out, respectively, in E/CN.4/RES/2005/69 and A/HRC/RES/8/7.

¹² Available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/625292>.

UNGPs, which is human rights due diligence, stands for a bundle of processes to ‘identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how [a company is addressing its] adverse human rights impacts’ (UN Human Rights Council, 2011, p. 16). Even though ‘due diligence’ is a term retrieved from the field of Business, human rights due diligence distinguishes itself from traditional due diligence by being an ongoing process and focusing mainly on the risks to stakeholders, instead of the risks to the company and its shareholders (Bonnitcha & McCorquodale, 2017). As a soft law instrument, the UNGPs do not establish legally binding obligations. Instead, they call States to adopt legislation that does so, and both States and businesses to provide access to remedy for affected rights holders. Notwithstanding being a soft law instrument, the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights regularly assesses and issues recommendations on the implementation of the UNGPs.¹³

After 2011, previous soft law instruments such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises¹⁴ and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy¹⁵ were reviewed to align with the UNGPs. The OECD Guidelines are ‘the most comprehensive international standard on responsible business conduct’ (OECD, n.d.), and expanded the set of areas where the standard of human rights due diligence coming from the UNGPs are applicable, including the environment, bribery and consumer interests, among others.

Notwithstanding the clear significance of the UNGPs for the advancement of Business and Human Rights in the immediate years after its adoption, the changes in corporate practice were scarce, which led to dissatisfaction on behalf of civil society. In that context, in 2013, a group of States led by Ecuador and South Africa proposed, in the UN Human Rights Council, to establish a new Intergovernmental Working Group with a mandate to elaborate a Legally Binding Instrument on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights, in the spirit of the initiatives prior to the adoption of the UNGPs. This group, chaired by Ecuador, was established on 26th of June 2014 by Resolution A/HRC/RES/26/9. Since 2014, negotiations on a legally binding treaty on this matter have been taking place.¹⁶

¹³ Established by the same Resolution that endorsed the UNGPs (A/HRC/RES/17/4).

¹⁴ Available at <https://www.oecd.org/daf/inv/mne/48004323.pdf>.

¹⁵ Available at <https://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/mne-declaration/lang--en/index.htm>.

¹⁶ Four versions of the legally binding treaty have been published so far: the Zero Draft (2018), the Revised Draft (2019), the Second Revised Draft (2020) and the Third Revised Draft (2021).

A short time after, national legislation requiring the exercise of mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence (MHREDD laws) by domestic and foreign businesses operating in the said country started to be adopted worldwide, especially in Europe, often providing for enforcement mechanisms such as civil, criminal and/or administrative sanctions. Among these laws are the UK's Modern Slavery Act (2015), the French Duty of Vigilance Act (2017), Australia's Modern Slavery Act (2018), the Dutch Child Labour Due Diligence Act (2019), the US Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act (2021), the Norwegian Transparency Act (2022), Canada's Forced Labour Bill (2022), and the German Supply Chain's Due Diligence Act (2023).

The trilogue of the European Union is currently negotiating the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive¹⁷, which seems to be the most comprehensive MHREDD legislation so far and, when adopted, will be transposed to the domestic law of the 27 EU Member States. Additionally, other countries such as Belgium and Austria have already expressed the will to adopt legislative acts on this topic. It is important to clarify that these acts are not anti-business. For companies, integrating human rights concerns into activities and operations is important not just from an ethical point of view, but also from a strategic one. In the European space, according to a research project commissioned by the European Commission, 75% of companies surveyed said a MHREDD initiative at EU level would be beneficial to businesses by providing legal certainty and a harmonised standard, reducing reputational risks and not impacting competition significantly, both within the internal market and abroad (European Commission, 2020).

Alongside with these developments, one can also see the increasing of strategic litigation against corporations and the adoption of a growing number of national court decisions, even in countries which do not have MHREDD legislation in place, which have recognised that parent companies can have a duty of care for the activities of subsidiaries domiciled abroad, as is the case of *Lungowe v. Vedanta*¹⁸, *Okpabi v. Royal Dutch Shell*¹⁹, *Oguru v. Shell*²⁰, and *Milieudefensie et al. v. Shell*²¹.

All these court cases and legislative initiatives seek to harden the existing soft-law standards and move beyond voluntary approaches, which have proven to have limited uptake

¹⁷ See more at

https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/doing-business-eu/corporate-sustainability-due-diligence_en.

¹⁸ Available at <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2017/1528.html>.

¹⁹ Available at <https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKSC/2021/3.html>.

²⁰ Available at <https://uitspraken.rechtspraak.nl/#!/details?id=ECLI:NL:GHDHA:2021:1825>.

²¹ Available at <https://uitspraken.rechtspraak.nl/#!/details?id=ECLI:NL:RBDHA:2021:5339>.

in meeting societal expectations toward companies. The 2022 Corporate Human Rights Benchmark assessing how 127 companies are aligning themselves with the UNGPs, shows progress compared to the 2017 baseline, but reveals that over a third of all companies still scored zero on human rights due diligence (World Benchmarking Alliance, 2022). Awareness on BHR issues on behalf of companies is still very little. This is problematic because it is not expectable that companies respect human rights ‘if they do not even know that they are supposed to do it (...) and how they are supposed to do it’ (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

In the abovementioned context of growing requirements for companies with the enactment of MHREDD laws and increasing consumers and investors’ pressure for responsible business practices, as well as strategic litigation against companies, it seems that is key to create awareness of the social and environmental impacts of business decisions, as well as provide managers with tools to address those impacts. In this context, ‘Business schools are an ideal place for that because it is all about training future business leaders so that it makes the difference for tomorrow’s companies’ (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2023). However, there is still not yet a significant percentage of Business schools who have identified this urgent need. As such, before proceeding to reflect on the important role BHR education plays in Business schools, we will look at how BHR education has been integrated in the curriculum of Business degrees, focusing on some factors which have contributed to the advancement of said incorporation.

Integration of BHR education in the curriculum of Business degrees

So far this thesis has focused on the evolution of the field of Business and Human Rights. The following section will first present the consequences that the increasing discussion regarding companies' responsibilities regarding human rights has had at the educational level, particularly at Business schools. Thereafter four factors that have been contributing to the advancement of BHR education in Business schools will be presented.

BHR courses in Higher Education Institutions were developed as a result of the growing recognition of the adverse impacts of business activities on human rights, which might also have been prompted by activist social and environmental movements which highlighted issues related to human rights and corporate accountability, such as labour rights, discrimination, and environmental degradation. Human rights courses started to address business-related issues in the 1970s, while the reverse happened later, already in the 1990s (Ewing, 2016). The first courses 'were aimed at graduate students, so Law students or Business students closer to their final degree, whether it be a Law degree or an MBA' (A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023). In the past three decades, BHR teaching mostly in Law, Business, and Public Policy schools has been increasing across regions of the world (Ewing, 2016), not only in the Westernised countries, but also, opportunely, in countries where the majority of rights holders affected by business-related activities live (Ewing, 2021). At the time of writing, it is taking place in more than 200 institutions in 45 countries (Teach BHR, n.d.). The adoption of the UNGPs was crucial to clarify expectations toward companies and change the BHR discussion from heavily legal to interdisciplinary and, in turn, had an impact in increasing BHR education in Business schools. However, the gap between BHR education in Law schools and Business schools still remains. At the time of writing, around 25% of the 334 memberships of the Teaching Business and Human Rights Forum (Teaching BHR Forum)²² are from Professors in Business schools, which amounts for approximately 1% of all the Business schools in the world (around 14,000²³). This allows us to conclude that less than 1% of Business schools in the world have BHR education in place. As such, one can say that the uptake of BHR teaching in Business schools is tremendously far from desirable. In general, 'there is still too much focus on shareholder value and profit

²² See more at <http://teachbhr.org/>.

²³ The number 14,000 is mentioned in various news related to accreditation published in the websites of Business schools. Some examples are <https://abs.uva.nl/about/accreditations/accreditations-memberships.html>, <https://www.aucegypt.edu/news/stories/school-business-among-1-worldwide-be-triple-crown-accredited>, and <https://www.montpellier-bs.com/international/news/montpellier-business-school-wins-equis-accreditation-and-the-triple-crown/>.

maximisation (...) and students are not sufficiently confronted with concerns that are not financial' (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023). The current tendency is for Business schools to teach students 'that the purpose of the company is to make money and the typical Milton Friedman kind of mindset' (E3, personal communication, April 12, 2023). This focus on the outdated model of shareholder primacy and market managerialism has given rise to broad base critiques on Business education due to it perpetuating an economic model that leads to social and environmental catastrophes for the profit of a wealthy elite, which the students are encouraged to join (Parker, 2018). In that sense, together with the trend of recognition of a different role for businesses in society must come along a different role for Business schools, which includes educating the future business leaders on BHR.

Even though BHR education is tremendously far from being mainstreamed, efforts to integrate BHR education in the curricula of distinguished Business schools have been important breakthroughs. In 2013, the first Business and Human Rights Centre at a Business school was established at NYU Stern and, since then, many other initiatives have proliferated. Additionally, in recent years case studies inventories have started to include more BHR thematics²⁴ and BHR research has been developing, providing a wide range of new textbooks and journal articles to support both teachers and students²⁵. We have started to see dedicated BHR graduate programmes, for example, the Master in Responsible Management with a Sustainable Business and Human Rights specialisation at the University of Geneva, and disruptive MBAs, such as the ones offered in the International Institute of Management Development²⁶ or the University of Vermont - which was actually renamed to 'Sustainable Innovation MBA'²⁷.

This qualitative study identifies four factors that seem to have been contributing to the incorporation of BHR education in the curricula of Business schools: (i) changes in the discourse of accreditation; (ii) the organisation of Professors and Business schools in networks (such as the GBSN for BHR and UN PRME); (iii) the increasing demand from students to learn about sustainability-related topics; and (iv) the increasing demand from companies, that are subject to growing pressure from consumers and investors to change their current way of operating. We will now quickly brush through the reason why each of these

²⁴ Until July 2023, the William Davis Institute library, which is focused on business cases and teaching materials for Business schools, listed 310 items under the 'human rights' category.

²⁵ A list of volumes can be found in footnote 57 of Ewing (2016). More recent volumes include Florian Wettstein, eds., *Business and Human Rights: Ethical, Legal, and Managerial Perspectives* (Cambridge University Press, 2022) and Anthony Ewing, eds., *Teaching Business and Human Rights* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023).

²⁶ See more at <https://www.imd.org/degree/mba/program-core-themes/>.

²⁷ See more at https://www.uvm.edu/business/simba_sustainable_innovation_mba.

factors can contribute to the advancement of BHR education in Business schools and, when appropriate, how its contributions could be leveraged.

Changes in the discourse of accreditation

Even though accreditation consumes massive amounts of resources and it does no longer provide for a unique selling proposition because hundreds of Business schools are accredited (E1, personal communication, April 24, 2023), several interviewees have mentioned that Business schools are extremely driven by it because, ultimately, it is a sign that the school ‘is trusted as a Business school of a certain quality’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023). For instance, at the American University of Cairo, accreditations such as AACSB, AMBA or EQUIS seem to have had an impact in BHR education being first adopted at the undergraduate level, where the impact of accreditation is bigger due to the higher number of students, due to their requirements of the school’s curriculum containing components relating to social impact. As such, it seems that ‘if AACSB starts to demand a BHR course at the core, Business schools will implement the BHR course at the core’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023) to maintain the accreditation. Accreditation entities have the potential of being the ones ‘going to mandate that Business schools modify the way they do things’ (E3, personal communication, April 12, 2023), but some advocacy work is necessary to get them to ask for BHR education specifically. It was consensual among interviewees that accreditations have changed in the past years and are becoming more demanding regarding the positive social impact of Business schools and the incorporation of sustainability-related content in their curricula, but there is no requirement for that incorporation to be done in compulsory courses and there does not seem to exist much sensitivity towards human rights. In the Guiding Principles and Standards for Business Accreditation of AACSB²⁸, ‘human rights’ is not mentioned once. The same applies to the MBA Accreditation Criteria of AMBA²⁹ and to the EQUIS Standards and Criteria³⁰. As such, even though under the umbrella of ‘sustainability’ and ‘social impact’, the incorporation of BHR education in more Business schools might be stimulated by the current standards of accreditation, we conclude that the leverage accreditation has to demand BHR education on Business schools is not being availed to its full potential.

²⁸ Available at

<https://www.aacsb.edu/-/media/documents/accreditation/2020-aacsb-business-accreditation-standardsredlined06302023.pdf?rev=2f85653bf7f940d9bb93f2a807cdbf72&hash=EC1FB243CC4902EF5C3C9AE756CB76A6>.

²⁹ Available at <https://www.associationofmbas.com/app/uploads/2022/05/New-MBA-Criteria-May-2022-1.pdf>.

³⁰ Available at https://www.efmdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023_EQUIS_Standards_and_Criteria.pdf.

Professors' and Business schools networks (GBSN for BHR and UN PRME)

Initiatives such as the Teaching Business and Human Rights Forum (Teaching BHR Forum)³¹, launched in 2011, and the BHRights Initiative³², launched in 2014, created relevant platforms for collaboration: the exchange of experiences between BHR educators have been key in discussing efforts to promote BHR education and providing tools to design new BHR courses. The number of memberships from the Teaching BHR Forum has risen considerably in the past years, which is indicative of the growing interest in teaching and researching on this topic. The aforementioned networks have also provided a platform for sharing teaching resources. An example would be the Teaching Business and Human Rights Handbook³³ created by the Teaching BHR Forum, which is a compilation of teaching notes on different subjects that Professors may use to help them introduce new topics in their courses or complement what they already teach. This is an important work because accessing relevant teaching resources on BHR is not always an easy task, particularly in developing countries where there is less access to online academic publications, books, and databases (Ewing, 2021).

The Global Business Schools Network (GBSN) has a subchapter in BHR founded in 2017 by the Geneva Centre for Business and Human Rights, the NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights, and the Alliance Manchester Business School. The GBSN for BHR comprises 120 Business schools that annually meet to discuss how to advance BHR education in Business schools. They are engaged in advocacy activities close to accreditation entities and have created materials that Professors can use in conversations with the University leadership to show BHR education is relevant, additionally to providing guidance and institutional support for these Professors to succeed in their claims (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023).

The UN has also been contributing to the advancement of BHR education through the work of the UN Global Compact Office and its national networks around the world. The UN Global Compact Office has developed BHR case studies and good practices notes that might be used in the context of higher education.³⁴ Additionally, it created the UN Principles for Responsible Management education (PRME), an initiative that comprises 800 Business

³¹ See more at <https://teachbhr.org/>.

³² See more at <http://www.cbs.dk/en/research/departments-and-centres/departments-of-intercultural-communication-and-management/the-bhrigh-initiative>.

³³ Available at <https://teachbhr.org/resources/teaching-bhr-handbook/>.

³⁴ See, for instance, the Human Rights and Business Dilemmas Forum (<https://hrbdf.org/>).

schools and seeks to ‘raise the profile of sustainability in schools around the world’ (UNPRME, n.d.) and reformulate Business education in a way that it adequately instructs responsible Business leaders. Their core consists of a set of six principles that Business schools commit to share progress on. As such, signatory Business schools are required to write an annual report on the sustainability-related projects and events the school organised (R. Chambers, personal communication, June 6, 2023). Professors’ networks, the GBSN for BHR, and the UN PRME are relevant in the advancement of BHR education in Business schools because they created ways for BHR educators to connect and collaborate with one another to address common challenges.

Nonetheless, there is certainly an argument that to be able to publicly declare the affiliation of a Business school to the PRME, there should be some concrete implementation thresholds to fulfil or even some kind of accreditation process associated with it (E1, personal communication, April 24, 2023), rather than merely reporting on projects and events. Additionally, the PRME has drafted an open letter calling academic institutions to fulfil its role of equipping students with the relevant knowledge and skills to be responsible business leaders by integrating BHR topics into their curriculum³⁵. However, this letter does not have so many signatories. On this behalf, it is important to acknowledge the ‘resource implications on the PRME side’ (E1, personal communication, April 24, 2023) but, similarly to accreditation, despite half a loaf being better than none, we believe PRME could make better use of its network to strongly support the implementation of BHR education.

Increasing demand from students

Students are a crucial stakeholder in BHR education in Business schools. BHR courses seem to be well-received by students and many interviewees have referred to the increasing number of students in their courses and conversations with students surveying them to check if there were more BHR courses they could take at their institutions, including at undergraduate level. For instance, Professor Lara Bianchi mentioned an increase of more than 245% of the students in her undergraduate BHR class in the past three years (L. Bianchi, personal communication, May 3, 2023).

³⁵ Available at https://d306pr3pise04h.cloudfront.net/docs/issues_doc%2Fhuman_rights%2FHuman_Rights_Working_Group%2FLetter_to_Academia%2FOpen_Letter_EN.pdf.

According to the Positive Impact Rating For Business Schools 2023³⁶, students expect ‘a higher level of societal engagement from their Faculty and School’ (Positive Impact Rating for Business Schools, 2023, p. 23). This study, based on 12.836 collected student responses, signals that students want the profit maximisation mindset to be left aside and sustainability to be put at the core of Business teaching, which requires it being mandatory. Two anecdotal examples that reiterate the idea that the students' demand of learning about sustainability-related topics seems to be growing is that even though the offering of classes with a focus on sustainability and corporate responsibility is expanding at the University of St. Gallen, they are normally ‘quite full’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023), and that the Erb Institute had so many undergraduates from the Ross Business School reaching out to the Institute and showing interest in learning about sustainability that it led to the creation of their undergraduate Erb Fellows programme (T. Nelidov, personal communication, May 3, 2023). Two reasons for this demand might be because some of the students studied were in contact with sustainability-related topics in their high school education or are genuinely interested in these matters and they expect to be taught about it at the university level (J. Schrempf-Stirling, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

When looking at the Sustainable Development Goals, one can see that a number of them are linked to human rights. This happens because the social pillar of sustainability encompasses human rights. As such, if students are taught sustainability-relevant skills and competence, those skills are also relevant for human rights. Since BHR and sustainability are connected, the more there is a student demand around sustainability and sustainable business practices, ‘the more there [is] a space for bringing in at least the human rights topic and BHR specifically’ (E2, personal communication, May 11, 2023). In that regard, the sustainability-related student demand can be a factor to pressure Programme Directors to include BHR education in Business curricula, if they are willing to listen to it.

Increasing demand from companies

The demand from the job market is also changing due to the growing consensus that companies do have a responsibility to respect human rights, the enactment of MHREDD laws, and the societal expectations on behalf of investors, consumers, and employees, who are increasingly pushing for the companies they work in to behave responsibly. Consumers are also becoming more demanding, in particular the younger generations, which ‘are more

³⁶ Available at https://www.positiveimpactrating.org/_files/ugd/d46c06_185c8dff990a42c2a246f9572c85cb40.pdf.

sustainability-oriented and are asking more questions about where the products come from and under what conditions were they made’ (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2023). Businesses are more and more engaged in complex human rights issues connected to their business strategies and, consequently, they are looking for graduates who are sufficiently familiarised with the international BHR standards for businesses and the evolving MHREDD legislation, and have the knowledge and skills to make well-informed decisions when addressing business-related human rights risks and associated opportunities, to guarantee a lower risk business profile.

The increase in sustainability-related job listings of companies in platforms such as LinkedIn or Google Jobs over the last three years is noticeable. According to the LinkedIn 2022 Global Green Skills Report, ‘job postings requiring green skills grew at roughly 8% annually since 2015’ (LinkedIn, 2022). Terry Nelidov, who regularly contacts with the business partners of the Erb Institute, says those job listings show ‘a *real* demand because they are *real* jobs’ and that ‘consultants are having trouble filling these jobs fast enough’ (T. Nelidov, personal communication, May 3, 2023), especially when it comes to investment and risk analysts, and supply chain positions related to human rights in retail and consumer facing brands who are concerned about their reputation. We cannot say whether these vacancies are filled by people coming from Business schools; however, Business schools have to wake up to the fact that the job demand for students who have literacy on BHR is only going to grow (J. Schremppf-Stirling, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

One interesting consideration is that sometimes students that go to fulfil those vacancies ‘end up ticking boxes in order to make sure that those companies fulfil some kind of ESG requirements’ and it is unclear ‘whether there is a job market for genuine human rights strategy’ (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023), even in countries that already have MHREDD laws in place. In that sense, the pressure to integrate more BHR concerns should first go to companies ‘and then of course Business schools will follow’. However, it would be best if ‘sometimes Business schools would take the lead and (...) tell employers what they should take care of’ (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023). This is a chicken and egg situation - it is unclear whether education transforms as a response to the changes in the labour market or if ‘companies see an increase in students coming out of Business school with an interest and training in human rights and the environment and then they create positions to accommodate that’ (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023). Nevertheless, academic institutions could indeed force a change in recruiting with a strengthening of BHR education. After all, companies want to hire

the best graduates and, if the best graduates demonstrate they are most attracted to work in socially and environmentally responsible companies, this could be a motivating force for businesses to adopt a more responsible business conduct.

In summary, after knowing the evolution of the field of BHR, this section focused on the subsequent incorporation of BHR education in Business schools, highlighting four factors that have already been contributing to the advancement of said incorporation, but still have the potential to be significantly more leveraged. We will now move on to the last section of the chapter, that argues that it is crucial that the incorporation of BHR education in Business schools is carried out to raise future business leaders' awareness of the human rights and environmental impacts of their decisions, and to prepare them to meet the future labour market's demands, which will inevitably continue to change as a result of the aforementioned context.

The role of Business and Human Rights education in Business schools

'Just as there are many leverage points to push companies toward greater respect for human rights, there are many leverage points to push universities for more and strengthened BHR education' (A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023). This section explains the role BHR education has in the context of Business schools, by identifying the leverage points that can be considered when engaging in advocacy work for incorporating BHR education in Business schools. A subsection is devoted to the particular role BHR education plays at the undergraduate level.

As stated before, businesses can have a huge impact on how universal human rights are enjoyed and the state of preservation of the environment. While environmental impacts are nowadays given relative importance on the basis of the classical conception of sustainability as referring to environmental sustainability, the same does not happen with human rights impacts. Nonetheless, complex human rights challenges are increasingly intrinsic to international business, and companies can no longer avoid embedding human rights in their organisation. As a consequence, students should get introduced early on to the fact that sustainability is not just about the environment, but also about social impact and human rights, in order to fully understand human rights challenges before they enter business. For instance, 'it is mediaeval that if you ask a typical Business student what modern day slavery is, very few could answer right, very few could even comprehend the concept (...) It is not expectable that you convert them into activists, but at least if they really comprehend it,

they will try to avoid it in the future' (E3, personal communication, April 12, 2023). In short, BHR education provides the understanding of how human rights phenomena are connected to business activities, which is crucial to better manage said phenomena.

By including BHR topics in the curriculum, it is possible to show students that human rights and, more broadly, sustainability issues are relevant for companies to fulfil their responsibilities towards society and should translate into practical and operational concerns that need to be addressed, which might not be the idea transmitted in other disciplines (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023). BHR education can also create the conscience that, once they become managers, students should not 'detach from their individual or human side because they see themselves only as a business manager that takes business decisions' since 'every decision [they] make, even when [they] are sitting at a desk, has repercussions that people literally will feel or the environment will feel' (J. Schrempf-Stirling, personal communication, April 17, 2023) and, as such, not only numbers have to be considered, but also each decision's impact on the ground. In this line, BHR education provides students with a different framework through which to look at business, which considers long-term scenarios and social and environmental repercussions. When pursuing Business degrees, especially at undergraduate level, students are in a formative stage where their eyes are being open to some of the fundamentals of how business is done (R. Chambers, personal communication, June 6, 2023). If Business students are not exposed to BHR education and go through their studies without building the thinking of appreciation of the wider societal harmful impacts of business, there is the risk they might never do, because once they are in business roles 'it is easy to become sort of subsumed in the business thinking and not necessarily [think] outside the box' (R. Chambers, personal communication, June 6, 2023). Terry Nelidov, who previously worked as a consultant with BSR, shared that many of their project engagements with mining, oil and gas companies started with workshops with the senior management on the business case for sustainability. This was needed because 'it was not included in the graduate or undergraduate Business degrees that the managers had received' and it was necessary for the implementation of their projects that they understood the importance of respecting their stakeholder's interests (T. Nelidov, personal communication, June 1, 2023). Business schools are the best place to build this understanding, which this example shows to be relevant in practice.

Business students 'are probably the most important target of a BHR class' (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023), since they may end up being in the position to influence and have a direct impact in corporate operations as business leaders and

managers. BHR education trains them to be able to identify adverse human rights and environmental impacts, see where they could occur, and see how to react to those, as well as to provide them with a common language and framework that can help them discuss and manage human rights and environmental challenges. Through BHR education, students become familiarised ‘with tools and standards like the UNGPs, and are exposed to the ways companies have managed human rights issues (...) so they are not learning on the job. Like anything else, whether it is Accounting or Finance or Supply Chain Management, [students] are better equipped to address these issues if [they] studied them and then applied them in the real world, rather than encountering them for the first time in the real world and only then finding the tools to deal with these issues’ (A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023). As such, Business schools and BHR education have a big role to play in empowering these future business leaders to take human rights matters in their own hands by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate BHR issues and respond to the growing corporate demand for graduates with such skills. This also results in them being less dependant on their legal officers to tell them how to fulfil their human rights responsibilities in practice, implement MHREDD requirements or manage their relationships with their employees, suppliers or the community. As Professor Lara Bianchi (personal communication, May 3, 2023) sums up, human rights ‘is not all about legal aspects and liability. Human rights are also about day-to-day management *and day-to-day management needs to be taught to managers*’. This knowledge is not only relevant for the ones who decide to take dedicated positions in BHR, for instance, in the CSR department of a company, which are a minority, but for all business functions, ranging from Human Resources to Compliance, Finance, Marketing, Public Relations, Strategy, Supply Chain Management, among others (UN Global Compact, n.d.). It is also through BHR education that students open their eyes to the fact they have human rights as individuals and employees and ‘they can use those rights - it is not just something that is out there on paper or policy that has no implications in the world of work’ (E2, personal communication, May 11, 2023).

After having had BHR education, it is expected that students are able to question a company’s functions and operations through an innovative human rights and environmental lens - ‘a lens that is a bit different than Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) because it is also informed by the weight of international standards’ (E2, personal communication, May 11, 2023) - and that they bring that different lens to the table where business strategies and decisions are discussed on a daily basis in order to create solutions that lead to a transformation of business practice that is more considerate of human rights impacts. On that

regard, it is worth mentioning that an alumna of one of the interviewees shared she had been able to challenge senior management on a sustainability issue because she felt confident and empowered enough due to the education she had received (E1, personal communication, April 24, 2023). Ultimately, BHR education's goal is to change the course of business by training responsible managers who will promote the use of human rights criteria in 'all the decisions made around the world every day by business leaders and managers, (...) which guide the course of business and the course of markets worldwide' (T. Nelidov, personal communication, June 1, 2023).

Considering that all of the abovementioned learnings are expected to be carried into the students' professional lives, it is clear that effective BHR education has a big potential to help business leaders and companies fulfil their responsibilities towards society, therefore playing a role in avoiding adverse human rights and environmental impacts and strengthening the protection of human rights and the environment. Considering the impact BHR education might have on the ground in the long-term, addressing BHR topics in education is a 'moral imperative' (E1, personal communication, April 24, 2023). On this note, the measurement of the impact of BHR education in Business schools could be an avenue for further research. Some indicators that could be measured are: (i) if students started to work in positions directly related to the BHR and in what kind of positions; (ii) if the training they receive gave them enough of a foundation that they can make a difference in that position; (iii) the deeds they were able to achieve, for instance, making progress on bringing human rights into that company's way of working; (iv) if more BHR positions were created due to the changes in education; (v) if the students became demanding employees pushing the companies they work in to address human rights and environmental issues (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023).

To conclude this section, it is worth reiterating the six aspects that were pointed out regarding the reasons why the role of BHR education in Business schools is such an important one: (i) firstly, it creates an understanding of how business activities and sustainability are connected with complex human rights challenges; (ii) secondly, it raises awareness on the students' future role in respecting human rights and the adverse social and environmental impacts their future decisions as managers might have on their stakeholders; (iii) thirdly, it empowers them with the tools and knowledge to effectively address these adverse impacts according to international standards on the topic and respond to the increasing demand of the job market for responsible managers; (iv) fourthly, it makes students understand they are not only duty bearers, but also rights holders; (v) fifthly, it opens

their eyes to what they can do differently as managers and how they can positively impact business practice by bringing a human rights and environmental lens to the decision table; and (vi) sixthly, if mainstreamed and translated into practice, it has the potential to change the course of business as we know it. The following subsection focuses on the role of BHR education in Business schools at the undergraduate level, where it appears to be even less common.

At the undergraduate level

All the interviewees agreed it would be extremely important to consistently expose students to BHR education at the undergraduate level, mostly due to the potential of it playing a role even more accentuated than at the graduate level. Especially in the undergraduate phase, people are living the university's 'transformational experience' (T. Nelidov, personal communication, June 1, 2023). Undergraduate students are 'formulating their outlook on life' and trying to '[figure] out [their] identity and get a sense of how [they] want to have an impact in the world' (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023). Some interviewees mentioned them seeming particularly open to new ideas and ways of thinking and questioning more structural aspects of mainstream business and life in general. Undergraduate students are also 'very receptive to [BHR] subjects' and 'wanting to take classes and show credentials of understanding these subjects' (R. Chambers, personal communication, June 6, 2023). As such, it seems that making students think automatically about human rights and environmental impacts when taking business decisions can be achieved 'in part, by teaching them these topics when they are 18, 19, 20 years old' (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023).

Undergraduates might have chosen a Business degree or major because they are interested in working in the private sector, but 'the interest they have in markets and in finance and in profit does not mean they do not care about the world' (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023). In this regard, some Professors mentioned seeing 'an increase in the number of young people who believe that business can be a force for good' (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023) in recent years, perhaps because 'most of them have not worked in large companies and bureaucratic and complex organisations and so they have not learned all the obstacles to change happening' (T. Nelidov, personal communication, May 3, 2023). Compared with the graduate students, who usually go to MBA programmes with 3 to 5 years of experience, '[undergraduate students] want things to

move faster’ and, to the image of Greta Thunberg, are ‘very impatient, very demanding, very decisive, and very activist’ (T. Nelidov, personal communication, May 3, 2023).

Another aspect that was mentioned about undergraduate students was them still being ‘quite impressionable in a sense’. As such, if the message that ‘human rights are a part of the core of what they study and it affects everything they do’ comes across, ‘the chance it sticks with some of the students is much higher than at the Master’s level’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023). It was also said that teaching to undergraduates is like ‘teaching from scratch to virgin students that do not necessarily believe profit maximisation is the goal, but they are open to what [the Professor is] telling them’, while when starting to teach at a Master’s level, the Professor is teaching ‘at a mindset that is corrupted already’ (L. Bianchi, personal communication, May 3, 2023). Professor Judith Schrempf-Stirling (personal communication, April 17, 2023) reiterated this idea by saying that, when formerly teaching a course in the final year of an undergraduate programme, she considered her course was placed too late in the curriculum ‘because when [the students] came to [her], it was hard to break their understanding that business is about money’ and to make them see ‘the arguments on the soft side’ and the interests of stakeholders other than investors (J. Schrempf-Stirling, personal communication, April 17, 2023). As such, when students were analysing the case studies, the criteria used in their decisions was very profit-focused, which they would justify under excuses like ‘everybody else is doing it’ (J. Schrempf-Stirling, personal communication, April 17, 2023). This leads us to think that if a BHR course is only added at later levels in the degree, it may be in ‘danger of signalling that it is not as important or that it is not a core aspect of business activity’ (E1, personal communication, April 24, 2023). Plus, if BHR ‘comes in later on, when [students are] kind of set in [their] thinking about what is business and what it is not’, it is likely that they will think human rights ‘is a consideration on top of everything else’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023). On the other hand, if one of the first classes for Business students was about human rights, ‘it would completely shift [their] perspective on what business is all about and it would kind of condition the way [they] learn all the other subjects’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023).

Even though undergraduates might have more difficulties than graduates grasping some concepts, ‘understanding how human rights relate to business activity can be appropriate for every level of University education’ (A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023). Undergraduate students are in the process of learning important basics of business and in ‘a cross-cutting issue such as sustainability, it may be overwhelming to

confront them with terminology and concepts that they might not have fully understood' (L. Feld, personal communication, April 13, 2023). As such, students would need to have a basis of understanding of a set of specific issues such as business models, forms of business, supply chain operations, CSR and maybe even some knowledge of geopolitics to be able to engage with BHR (E2, personal communication, May 11, 2023). However, it all comes down to a coherent curriculum design. As such, BHR education should take place as early as the students have enough operational knowledge to grasp it, for students to understand that the purpose of business can be both profit and positive impact from the start (J. Schrempf-Stirling, personal communication, April 17, 2023) and bring that framework into other disciplines. To avoid the contents from being too complex or too complicated, Professors should not be afraid of teaching at a fairly simplistic and trivial level and '[breaking] it down to where they are at' (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023), as long as the key messages come across.

Last, but not least, only adding BHR education to the curriculum later on is a missed opportunity for making future business leaders sensible to BHR issues, since at undergraduate level more students can be reached and many undergraduates will not even proceed to get Master's degrees or MBAs, which means this can be the only time in their education in which they can have BHR education. Another reason why it is important to incorporate BHR education at undergraduate level is because it might trigger the interest to specialise in the field during their graduate studies or in their professional careers or at least some reflections on the type of company students want to work in after graduating.

As such, we conclude that the impact of BHR education in Business schools at the undergraduate level is potentially larger than at the graduate level, due to the undergraduate's receptiveness to BHR issues and willingness to question the traditional *modus operandi* of business. It seems that having BHR education at this level may result in a bigger level of interiorisation of the key message that the business purpose can be both profit and positive impact on stakeholders, therefore potentially increasing its impact, since this type of considerations are added from the start of their Business education. As such, our main argument is that BHR education should take place as early as the students have enough business operational knowledge to grasp all the necessary concepts. Having established that it is beneficial for BHR Education in Business schools to start at undergraduate level, we will now analyse the current practice of BHR education in Business schools in a sample of eight undergraduate BHR-related courses, from seven Business schools.

Chapter 2

The practice of Business and Human Rights education in Business schools at the undergraduate level

Following a reflection on the importance of BHR education in Business schools, particularly at the undergraduate level, it seems relevant to understand what is the current practice of BHR education in Business schools. As such, the goal of this chapter is to characterise such practice on a sample of seven Business schools. The characteristics and content of BHR-related courses varies across the world, the institutions in which they are taught and, when Professors are given enough leeway, their own personal options. As such, it is important to note that the following analysis only covers some examples of how BHR education is being integrated in Business schools at the undergraduate level in seven Business schools already engaged in BHR teaching, and it does not seek in any way to be exhaustive.

The analysis will be structured in three parts. Firstly, there will be a brief discussion regarding whether BHR education is embedded across the curriculum of the seven undergraduate Business programmes in a multidisciplinary way or if it is mostly left for specialised courses or modules. This will not be assessed through the analysis of the syllabi of the BHR-related courses, but only through the analysis of data collected during the interviews with the Professors that teach these eight BHR-related courses, since the syllabi of specific courses cannot provide information on the other existing courses in the curriculum.

Secondly, the focus will be in specialised BHR-related courses offered in the seven Business schools. The eight courses are not the only BHR-related courses in these schools, but the analysis will be limited to them because they are the ones taught by the Professors that filled in the Google Form and also provided additional clarifications by email. The analysis has its limitations because course syllabi do not illustrate in its entirety what happens in practice in the classroom. Generally, from the course syllabi, one can retrieve fairly detailed learning outcomes and assessment activities, but will only have an overview of the teaching methods used and the topics that are covered. In courses that are not stand-alone BHR courses, it is not always easy to understand which topics include BHR discussions or are approached from a BHR lens, or which learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment activities relate or are used in the BHR component of the course. However, there is the assumption that they will still provide a reasonable representation of the educational practice. Therefore, the course syllabi will be analysed in order to assess the current practice

of BHR-related courses in Business schools at undergraduate level in regards to the learning outcomes and assessment activities, teaching methods and course content of such BHR-related courses.

Incorporation of BHR across the analysed undergraduate Business curricula

From the data collected in the interviews, the general tendency seems to be BHR education taking place in specialised BHR-related courses, rather than BHR thematics or a BHR lens being infused in already existing courses, even though that might happen punctually. It seems that even in Business schools engaged in BHR education, core courses remain quite traditional, except when the Professor that teaches BHR-related courses also teaches other core courses, as is the case of Professor Ali Awni, who also teaches the course of ‘Supply Chain Management’, the case of Professor John Ferguson, who also teaches the course ‘Management Accounting and Control’ or the case of Professor Lara Bianchi, who also teaches the course ‘Business, Ethics and Sustainability’.

In disciplines such as Business Ethics, Business and Society or Corporate Social Responsibility, BHR topics are sometimes covered as part of a module. As most of the times Business Ethics and Business and Society courses are compulsory, having a BHR module can trigger the interest of the students to enrol in electives related to BHR in following years.

There is one Business school that is an exception. In that Business school there is no specialised course on BHR but students are exposed to many BHR issues throughout their degree programme, so ‘they are pretty well versed and quite receptive to engage with issues on BHR’ (E1, personal communication, April 24, 2023) by the time they might opt to have a CSR module in their final year, which includes a module on BHR where they can engage with BHR material more in-depth. This happens because most professors ‘take [a sustainability and critically oriented social sciences approach] even if they are teaching mainstream material, highlighting the limitations and the arguments against taken-for-granted assumptions’ (E1, personal communication, April 24, 2023), which fosters students' critical eye for standard business practices. This might be related to the fact that as a non-accredited school, there is more discretion regarding what to cover.

Having in consideration that BHR education seems to be mainly taking place in specialised BHR-related courses, we will now move on to the characterisation of such undergraduate courses.

Characterisation of analysed undergraduate BHR-related courses

The eight BHR-related courses will be characterised having in consideration three aspects: (i) if they are a stand-alone BHR course, an already existing course that includes a BHR module, or an already existing course that addresses BHR issues throughout the course; (ii) the number of teaching hours devoted to BHR in that course; and (iii) if the course is compulsory or elective. Table 1 helps structuring the data collected.

Name of School and University	Name of degree	Name of course	Type of incorporation of BHR education	Number of ECTS of Course	Approx. number of teaching hours devoted to BHR	Type of course (compulsory/ elective)
Adam Smith Business School of the University of Glasgow	Bachelor's Degree in Accountancy and Finance	Accountability and Human Rights (ACCFIN4031)	BHR stand-alone course	10 ECTS ³⁷	26 hours	Elective
IUSS Pavia & University of Pisa - Economics and Management Department	Bachelor's Degree in Management for Business and Economics	International Management and Marketing (544PP)	BHR integrated throughout the course	12 ECTS	Difficult to calculate	Compulsory
Geneva School of Economics and Management	Bachelor in Economics and Management	Business and Human Rights (S230022)	BHR stand-alone course	3 ECTS	21 hours	Elective
Nottingham University Faculty of Social Sciences / Business School	Bachelor in Management	Business, Human Rights and Sustainable Development (BUSI 2044)	BHR stand-alone course	5 ECTS ³⁸	18 hours	Elective
School of Business of the American University of Cairo	Bachelor of Business and Entrepreneurship	Business & Society (MGMT 4970)	BHR module integrated within the course	n/a*	n/a*	Elective
University of Connecticut School of Business	Undergraduate Business Program	Corporate Social Impact and Responsibility (MKTG 3252)	BHR stand-alone course	6 ECTS ³⁹	36 hours	Elective (except for the Social Responsibility and Impact Minor)
University of Connecticut School of Business	Undergraduate Business Program	Business Solutions for Societal Challenges (MJGT 3254)	BHR integrated throughout the course	6 ECTS	Difficult to calculate	Elective (except for the Social Responsibility and Impact Minor)
University of St. Andrews School of Management	Bachelor in Management	Corporate Social Responsibility, Accountability and Reporting (MN4227)	BHR module integrated within the course	10 ECTS	13 hours	Elective

³⁷ The courses taught at the University of Glasgow and the University of St. Andrews were converted to ECTS by dividing the credits according to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Credit Points by two, according to <https://scqf.org.uk/services-partnerships/international-european-tools-and-projects/european-tools/>.

³⁸ Converted to ECTS by dividing the credits according to the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme by two, according to <https://www.study.eu/article/what-is-the-ects-european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system>.

³⁹ The credits of the two courses taught at the University of Connecticut were converted to ECTS by multiplying the credits according to the US Credit System by two, according to <https://www.study.eu/article/what-is-the-ects-european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system>.

Table 1 - Characterisation of analysed BHR-related courses

*n/a - Not available by the time of submission of this thesis.

In relation to the type of insertion of BHR within a course, we observe that out of the eight courses, half are stand-alone BHR courses. In two of the cases, BHR is inserted as a module within an already existing course and in two cases, an already existing course addresses BHR issues or uses consistently a BHR lens throughout the course - in these two cases, as the BHR content is spread throughout, it is particularly difficult to calculate the number of hours devoted to BHR. It is of note that the BHR modules were inserted in courses related either to Business and Society or Corporate Social Responsibility.

Regarding the number of teaching hours devoted to BHR in those courses, it is worth analysing separately the stand-alone BHR courses from the rest. When it comes to the stand-alone courses, the range of teaching hours goes from 18 hours to 36 hours. BHR modules integrated in a course that addresses other themes sum up to 13 hours. As such, one might conclude that the option of teaching BHR in a stand-alone course does not necessarily mean the number of hours of BHR education that the students are exposed to is significantly superior to when a BHR module is inserted in an already existing course.

In relation to the courses being compulsory or elective, one can see a huge prominence of elective courses, regardless of them being stand-alone courses or other courses where BHR modules are included or a BHR lens is had throughout. One reason for this may be the lack of flexibility when designing undergraduate Business curricula that will be explored in chapter 3.6. In only one out of eight cases, BHR content was introduced throughout a compulsory course, which happens to be a core Business course on International Management. This is a good example of how core courses, which have a high number of hours - in this case, 80 teaching hours - can accommodate BHR thematics.

In the following sections, three aspects of the eight course syllabi will be analysed: proposed learning outcomes and assessment activities, teaching methods, and main topics. We will start with the analysis of the text contained in the course syllabi describing the proposed learning outcomes for these undergraduate BHR-related courses.

Learning outcomes and assessment activities in the analysed course syllabi

Learning outcomes are affirmations that convey with precision what students will have learnt and be able to do after completing some kind of learning activity, such as a course. Learning outcomes usually translate into knowledge, skills or attitudes (Yildirim and Baur, 2016), and, supposedly, they ought to match the teaching and assessment activities in order to set adequate students' expectations. Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), which is a 'classification system of learning outcomes based on the level of students' understanding necessary for achievement or mastery' (Torres et al., 2020, p. 3) was used to classify the learning outcomes and assessments activities collected from the course syllabi of the eight undergraduate BHR-related courses in focus.

Learning outcomes are mostly centred on the cognitive domain. After Krathwohl's revision of Bloom's Taxonomy, which led to the Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment (2002), cognitive skills have been classified in six groups: (i) remembering, (ii) understanding, (iii) applying, (iv) analysing, (v) evaluating, and (vi) creating, each associated with a set of verbs (see Annex 2). The first three levels promote Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), while the last three levels promote Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), which imply a more sophisticated type of learning built on a decent level of competence at the lower levels.

The learning outcomes presented in the eight undergraduate BHR-related course syllabi were, on the basis of their verb, classified in one of the six groups of the Bloom's Taxonomy. In cases where there was more than one verb in a learning outcome, for instance, in 'Explain and evaluate alternative conceptions of human rights, their foundations, meaning, and implications for business'⁴⁰, each verb was analysed as a different learning outcome.

⁴⁰ Learning outcome of the course 'Accountability and Human Rights', taught at the Adam Smith Business School of the University of Glasgow.

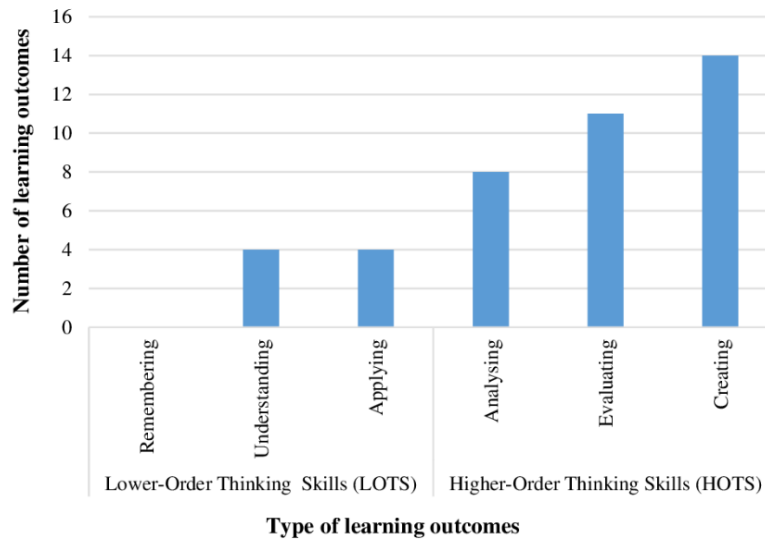


Figure 1 - Learning outcomes classified according to Bloom's Taxonomy

Figure 1 presents the 41 learning outcomes mentioned in the eight analysed course syllabi classified according to the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy and grouped into LOTS and HOTS. The overwhelming majority of learning outcomes (81%) were classified under HOTS, while 19.5% were classified under LOTS. The highest percentage of learning outcomes belongs to 'creating' (34%), which is the highest level of the revised Bloom's Taxonomy, followed by 'evaluating' (27%) and 'analysing' (20%) - all HOTS. On the LOTS side, the same percentage (9.75%) of learning outcomes was classified under 'understanding' and 'applying', and no learning outcome was classified under 'remembering'.

The category 'creating' refers to a level in which 'students are to generate, build, or construct solutions or ideas to the problems, to make products, and discover something innovative' (Torres et al., 2020, p. 13). It seems that the syllabi-designers of the analysed course syllabi were attentive to the different levels of cognitive processing when designing the course's learning outcomes. The predominance of learning outcomes connected to HOTS demonstrates their goal to promote students' deep learning of BHR issues, so that students are able to critically reflect on companies' strategies and practices and can come up with out of the box solutions to address human rights challenges in a real-life context.

Having already classified the learning outcomes of the eight undergraduate BHR-related courses, we will now proceed to classifying the assessment activities mentioned in their syllabi. Classifying assessment activities based on Bloom's Taxonomy is useful to know to which cognitive level they are adapted to.

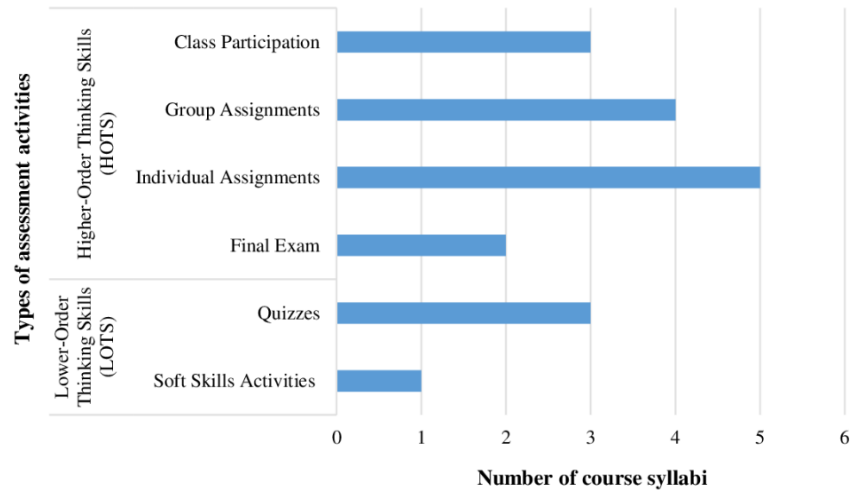


Figure 2 - Distribution of assessment activities across BHR-related course syllabi

Figure 2 shows how frequently each of these assessment activities is mentioned in the set of analysed course syllabi. In this figure we can see that the most frequently mentioned assessment activity is individual assignments, which include presentations, essays and reports. Individual assignments are mentioned in five out of eight course syllabi. Group assignments, which include group presentations, group essays, qualitative research studies and consultant's reports, are mentioned in half of the course syllabi, followed by quizzes and class participation, which are mentioned in three out of eight course syllabi, and lastly by final exams, which are mentioned in two. Soft skills activities are only mentioned in one of the course syllabi.

Similarly to what Torres et al. (2020) performed, the assessment activities collected were also classified based on HOTS and LOTS. Class participation, individual assignments, group assignments, and final exams were classified as HOTS. Quizzes and soft skills activities were classified as LOTS. While class participation and individual assignments clearly require the use of critical thinking skills, the classification of final exams and quizzes is more dubious because it depends on the type of questions asked. We assumed most questions in exams would require students to analyse BHR challenges to come up with a stance at the end, while quizzes would ask questions that would only require understanding and recalling information.

Figure 2 reveals that the majority of the assessment activities used in this set of BHR-related courses are of HOTS order, which means they challenge students' critical thinking skills. As such, it seems that Professors that teach these courses are actually measuring the intended levels of thinking stated in the learning outcomes and the learning

outcomes and assessment activities are well aligned, which fosters students' development. As the pedagogy should also be in accordance with the learning outcomes, the analysis that follows in the next subchapter will be relative to the teaching methods mentioned in the analysed BHR-related courses.

Teaching methods in the analysed course syllabi

By definition, a teaching method is a technique or a strategy that the teacher defines to enhance students' learning experience and, as such, should suit the proposed learning outcomes for the course. Ganyaupfu (2013) presents three types of methods: (i) the student-centred method, which is associated to active learning where the role of the teacher is to facilitate the learning process and the focus is on real life thematics; (ii) the teacher-centred method, which is a more theoretical approach that revolves around the teacher as transmitter of knowledge and does not require engagement between subjects; and (iii) the teacher-student interactive method, that combines aspects from the previous two methods and motivate learners be engaged and to seek and produce their own knowledge in class.

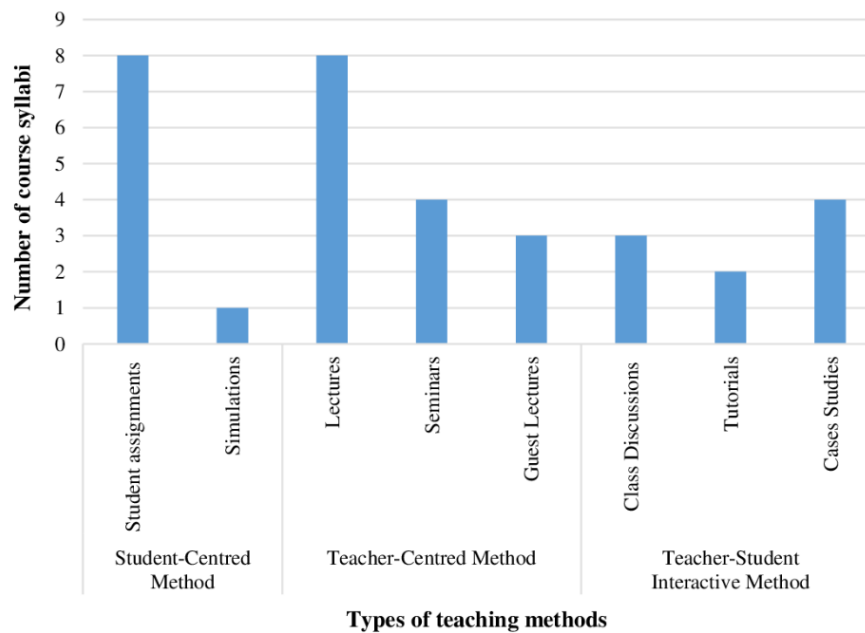


Figure 3 - Distribution of teaching methods across BHR-related course syllabi

The teaching methods mentioned in the analysed course syllabi were categorised into these three methods. Figure 3 shows how frequently each of these teaching methods is mentioned in the set of analysed course syllabi. In this figure we can see the teaching methods most frequently mentioned are lectures and student assignments, such as

presentations, essays, or any kind of individual or group projects, which show there is at least a combination of the student-centred and teacher-centred methods in all courses. Seminars and case studies, which are mentioned in half of the course syllabi, are the third and fourth most mentioned teaching methods.. The least frequently mentioned teaching methods are tutorials and simulations, the latter probably due to the logistics implied in its organisation. Therefore, the majority of teaching methods mentioned in the course syllabi are categorised under ‘teacher-centred methods’ (average of the number of syllabi that refers teaching-centred methods = 5), but by a small difference when compared to student-centred methods (4.5) or teacher-student interactive method (4.5).

Course content in the analysed course syllabi

The syllabi screening allowed to identify a list of main topics covered in the eight undergraduate BHR-related courses. The topics listed in the syllabi were categorised in the five themes presented in table 2: (i) Concept of BHR, (ii) Business and societal challenges, (iii) International frameworks for BHR, (iv) How to respect human rights in practice, and (v) BHR in different industries.

Themes	Topics retrieved from the syllabi
1. Concept of BHR	Introduction to BHR, distinction from CSR, connection between BHR and globalisation, expectations and drivers for BHR, concept of human rights, relationship between human rights and business, human rights implications of global business operations.
2. Business and societal challenges	The role of business in addressing societal challenges, business responses to societal challenges, shareholders vs. stakeholders value, climate change and just transition to net zero, tax avoidance, sustainable development, human rights and environment, DEI, economic and social inequalities, modern slavery in global supply chains, living wages, base of the pyramid.
3. International frameworks for BHR	UNGPs, state duty to protect human rights, corporate responsibility to respect human rights, regulation and policy responses related to multinational enterprises.
4. How to respect human rights in practice	Different approaches to enforcing human rights standards for companies, operationalising respect for human rights, human rights due diligence, policies and strategies to meet stakeholder interests, multi stakeholder initiatives, new business models that allow profit and principles to coexist, remedy, mechanisms of corporate accountability, implications on various business functions, responsible business practices (finance, accounting and reporting, communication to investors and consumers, human resource management, etc.).
5. BHR in different industries	Fashion sector, extractive sector, sports sector, agricultural sector, financial sector, gambling sector, tourism sector.

Table 2 - Topics and themes

After categorising the topics into five themes, as previously shown, an analysis was carried out to see which topics were included in each of the eight course syllabi. Figure 4 shows the frequency of the appearance of each theme in the set of analysed course syllabus, allowing us to detail the most recurring themes.

In this word cloud, it is possible to observe that, not surprisingly, the words that appear the most in the analysed course syllabi are ‘business’, ‘human’, and ‘rights’, which simultaneously identifies the two main ‘entities’ whose interconnection is studied in the course and forms the name of the discipline. The terms challenges, corporate, CSR, global, international, respect, responsible, role, societal, stakeholder, strategies and sustainability are also identified as of great relevance. They refer back to ideas such as the role business plays in society, the responsibility to respect human rights, human rights challenges connected to business operations across global supply chains, the link between sustainability and human rights, and the distinction between CSR and BHR. The least frequent words, such as UNGPS, value, legal, decision, expectations, future, or change, may suggest the need of higher emphasis of those topics in the course content.

To conclude this chapter, we will now provide a systematic answer to research question number one, relative to the current practice concerning BHR education in undergraduate Business degrees. Reiterating that the sample of eight undergraduate BHR-related course syllabi is exemplificative rather than exhaustive, the main findings of this chapter are the following: (i) BHR education most frequently takes place in specialised BHR courses or modules, rather than being incorporated across the undergraduate Business curriculum; (ii) BHR modules are included in disciplines such as Business and Society and Corporate Social Responsibility, (iii) a BHR stand-alone course does not necessarily have more teaching hours than a BHR module incorporated in an already existing course; (iv) BHR education predominantly takes place in elective courses; (v) most of the learning outcomes described in the set of course syllabi are classified under Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and, within HOTS, under ‘creating’; (vi) the most frequent assessment activities mentioned in the set of course syllabi are of HOTS order; (vii) the learning outcomes and assessment activities as described in these courses syllabi are well aligned and focus on students’ critical thinking; (viii) the teaching methods most frequently mentioned are lectures and student assignments, which show there is at least a combination of the student-centred and teacher-centred methods in all courses; (ix) most of the courses cover at least three of four themes on the concept of BHR, the connection between business and societal challenges, international frameworks for BHR, and strategies and tools that can be used to operationalise the responsibility to respect human rights. Although limited by the sample size, these conclusions demonstrate the current practice of BHR education in

undergraduate Business degrees, which will, when possible, be contrasted with the views of BHR experts and ours on what the ideal practice would be.

Chapter 3

The advancement of Business and Human Rights education in Business schools at undergraduate level

As previously mentioned in subchapter 1.3, undergraduate BHR education in Business schools has the potential of having an even bigger impact than at the graduate level by providing the students with a human rights and environmental lens from the start of their Business degree, which can potentially impact the way students frame what they learn in the other disciplines. Having this potential in mind, it is relevant to analyse how can undergraduate BHR Education in Business schools be improved based on the analysed examples of BHR Education in undergraduate Business curricula. This chapter consists in a thematic analysis of experts' interviews on how Business schools can best prepare the future Business leaders to effectively manage complex human rights challenges, starting at the undergraduate level. The different ideas are organised, in essence, in the same categories that were used in chapter two, in order to facilitate comparisons by the reader between the current practice and what we identify as ideal practice.

We will start by analysing if BHR education should be embedded across the curriculum or the stand-alone BHR course approach is preferred. Focusing on BHR courses, we will, firstly, discuss the benefits and disadvantages of having compulsory or elective BHR and, secondly, we will analyse the learning outcomes, teaching methods, and course content referred in the interviews, in order to present a synthesis of the most frequently mentioned ideas. Lastly, we will analyse some challenges that Professors trying to advance the agenda of BHR education in Business schools face and recommendations to overcome them shared by the interviewees. It is worth clarifying that this chapter does not seek to be exhaustive in the options that it presents nor providing a one-suit-all answer. Optimal options are dependent on the School, University, and Professor seeking to introduce BHR in the curriculum. Rather, this chapter consists of some thoughts and examples that could inspire the advancement of BHR education at the undergraduate level.

Incorporation of BHR across the curriculum

Based on the analysis conducted in the previous chapter related to the current practice of undergraduate BHR education, we concluded that the general tendency is for it to take place in specialised BHR-related courses. However, as previously mentioned, the ambition of BHR education is to show students a different perspective on business so that hopefully they will become more responsible managers. As such, it is questionable if systemic thinking can be created through one isolated BHR course. As such, one should start by reflecting on whether effective BHR education is achieved through the establishment of specialised courses or modules in BHR or embedding BHR education consistently across the curriculum.

Before proceeding to the analysis, it is worth highlighting that a curriculum is designed based on a selection of the knowledge that the curriculum designers consider the most relevant for students to acquire (Silva, 2017), which refers not only to a theme getting in the curriculum, but also to the emphasis that each theme is given. Having this in consideration, most of the interviewees said the best approach would be combining both the stand-alone course or module approach with BHR being integrated across the degree. Having BHR treated in an isolated manner, in a single stand-alone BHR course or module, would make BHR be perceived like any other discipline, whereas in fact, it is a foundation transversal to everything else (J. Schrempf-Stirling, personal communication, April 17, 2023). As such, integrating BHR transversally across disciplines would be ideal in order for students ‘to construct a broader view and understanding that human rights belong or means something in the different functions of the business’ (E2, personal communication, May 11, 2023).

However, to ‘manage to convince all Professors who are teaching the core courses at undergraduate level to integrate sustainability and human rights into their class’ (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023) would present some challenges. While some Professors who teach core courses might be able to start bringing different angles to their teaching because they have a sustainability or CSR background, most will not, and some might not even be receptive to reflect on how human rights and sustainability in general are relevant to their discipline. ‘Professors teach what they know most and many Finance professors, Accounting professors, Marketing professors or even Law professors do not know very much about BHR or sustainability’ (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023). As such, they do not feel comfortable or confident teaching something new for them, particularly if they are senior experienced professors (T. Nelidov, personal communication,

June 1, 2023). In that regard, there is the risk that, when sprinkled into other classes and taught by non-specialist Professors, BHR is not taught in a critical way that confronts students with difficult facts and ‘[challenges] them to think a bit more about some of the harsh realities of the world’ (R. Chambers, personal communication, June 6, 2023) lapsing more into a CSR-focused type of teaching or focusing on the benefits of being sustainable for the bottom line instead. Therefore, it is arguable that the incorporation of BHR education across the curriculum would only be beneficial if taught from a critical perspective and with a minimum degree of specialisation, even if BHR was not the core topic of the class. Nevertheless, we consider it would be important to rethink every core course and reflect where BHR could be realistically integrated, for instance, through case studies, materials, discussions, or guest lectures related to responsible business, in order for students to really develop a human rights lens through which to look at every aspect of business functions and operations. For instance, BHR case studies are a simple way of sparking a small discussion on the connection between BHR and the discipline the specific class focuses on. Even though this exercise might not be easy, it is a discussion that has to be had and ‘universities need to make an effort to somehow incorporate [BHR] where possible’ (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023). There are courses in relation to which it is easy to tell how to infuse human rights into them, such as Supply Chain Management, considering most of human rights violations happen in the midst of the supply chains, beyond the level of first tier suppliers. Business Strategy, Corporate Governance, Human Resources, Corporate Social Responsibility and Business Ethics are other courses in which it is pretty straightforward to see the connection with human rights. Other core courses such as Finances might be perceived as a little bit more resistant, even though it is still possible to approach topics like impact investment and responsible finance (E3, personal communication, April 12, 2023). The same applies to Accounting, where social and environmental criteria can be incorporated into mainstream management accounting and students can question the utility of performance measurement or the role of accounting in exercising control, which is also relevant for BHR (E1, personal communication, April 24, 2023). To carry out this type of transdisciplinary analysis, a multidisciplinary committee could be established to work out a minimum approach to a coordinated and cohesive incorporation of BHR in the curriculum (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023).

If BHR were fully integrated into every aspect of a company’s operations, there would no longer be a need for a dedicated human rights department. Similarly, ‘one could aspirationally say that the long-term goal of BHR education is to eliminate the need for BHR

education’ (A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023), since all subjects would be approached from a BHR lens. However, even if other courses integrate a BHR perspective throughout, most of the interviewees have mentioned that a BHR stand-alone course or module would still be valuable, mainly because it would give the students the opportunity to dig significantly deeper on BHR topics with a Professor who is specialised on the topic. As to teach one BHR module or course you only need one specialised Professor, the stand-alone course or module approach ends up being more easily implemented. However, we reiterate that the ideal option would be for this stand-alone course or module to be combined with a curricular emphasis on BHR, that guaranteed BHR was adequately present across courses, evidencing its relevance and implications for different fields and job functions within companies and giving students a point of reflection to query every aspect of business operations through a human rights lens, rather than being offered as an isolated subject.

Compulsory introduction to BHR

Based on the analysis conducted in the previous chapter related to the current practice of undergraduate BHR education, we concluded there is a huge prominence of elective courses, regardless of them being stand-alone courses or other courses where BHR modules are included or a BHR lens is had throughout. However, the majority of the interviewees expressed they thought that, ideally, an undergraduate BHR course or module should be compulsory. There is certainly an argument that students ‘should be exposed to BHR as a core requirement of their business curriculum’ (A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023), due to the subject not having less importance than the core courses and the need to guarantee all the future business leaders’ have acquired a set of tools that allows them to adequately manage BHR challenges in practice. Additionally, it would also be a good symbolic measure because if a BHR course is marked as compulsory consistently this sends a message from the institution to prospective students and businesses that BHR topics are part of the students’ integral training and that the University considers human rights a core of doing business (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023). On the contrary, when a course is marked as elective, the University shows to students it considers that course ‘as something that is nice to have and not something that [the students] need to absolutely know about’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023), which is not the case here.

Additionally, if BHR-related courses are optional, most likely a small group of students, ‘who are self-selecting and who were already interested or who might come to the university with some susceptibility to being interested in human rights’ will take these

courses and other closely related courses and develop a mindset of respect for human rights, but there will be no progress regarding introducing BHR to the vast majority of the students (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023). Another argument in favour of the course's compulsoriness is that when a class is optional, students might have other considerations in mind when deciding to enrol in a course, which 'may not always be to get the best education but, for example, to achieve the best grades with the least effort' (L. Feld, personal communication, April 13, 2023), and it is sad to think that for such short sighted thoughts, students could be prevented from having BHR education.

However, it is worth noting there may also be downsides to making courses compulsory 'as students then approach the issue of knowledge as a 'have to do' rather than a 'nice to do' (K. Buhmann, personal communication, June 7, 2023), while in elective courses the students tend to have enrolled because they are motivated to learn about that topic. Furthermore, when a course is compulsory, there are always students enrolled that are not interested in the subject or even who try to undermine and sabotage the course, which might make it difficult to teach even to those who actually like it (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023). There is also the concern that the difficulty of the subject does not allow to really shape the students' view if they did not make the autonomous choice to learn about it (E2, personal communication, May 11, 2023).

Another challenge that was mentioned by several of the interviewees, is that undergraduate degrees are usually short, which makes their curricula very congested and turns the question of having a compulsory BHR course in internal struggles between BHR Professors and Faculty members who teach the core courses or even different disciplines 'within a more kind of enlightened management studies area' such as CSR or Business Ethics and that consider their perspective to be the most relevant to be taught to everyone (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023). Due to these struggles, some interviewees expressed the opinion that it did not seem feasible to integrate a compulsory BHR stand-alone course at the undergraduate level - 'perhaps an elective for students heading towards a sustainability specialisation later on in their Master's' (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023) - but BHR should indeed be integrated in an already existing course.

As such, the common denominator between the opinions of the interviewees is that there should be, *at minima*, some type of compulsory introduction to human rights and the environment for all students as part of their degree, distributed across the curriculum or through a series of lectures, a stand-alone BHR course or a specialised module within another

course - which should not be a legal course due to the risk of BHR being perceived by students as a purely legal and compliance issue, but a Supply Chain Management, CSR, Business Ethics or a broader sustainability course - in order ‘to build fundamental awareness and knowledge and spur students’ interest for masters’ courses on BHR’ (K. Buhmann, personal communication, June 7, 2023). On the contrary, ‘it is a real opportunity missed if students do not gain any of this knowledge while they are studying’ (R. Chambers, personal communication, June 6, 2023). On top of the basic compulsory introduction, additional elective specialised courses could be offered to the students who are particularly interested in the topic and attendance could be strongly encouraged. It is worth noting that ‘business students are very much scared they will not get high paying jobs or that they cannot get a job quickly after graduating’, so if they do not have a compulsory introduction early on that helps them understand that sustainability ‘is not just about the environment but also about the social impact of the company’ and the added value of learning about BHR for their professional careers, they will not opt to take electives on BHR or demand learning about sustainable business practices from a human rights perspective across courses (E2, personal communication, May 11, 2023).

Despite the downsides to making a BHR course compulsory rather than elective, we consider that the guarantee that all undergraduate Business students in a given School have BHR education surpasses the internal struggles in which one might have to participate. Nonetheless, the most important thing is that the approach taken increases the number of students exposed to BHR. If having a compulsory course or module is not possible, it is always preferable that there are more elective courses making BHR available to students. However, to guarantee that all undergraduate Business students are sensitised for considering human rights impacts when making business decisions, a compulsory BHR stand-alone course or one or several BHR modules integrated within compulsory courses would be the ideal.

Learning outcomes for the introduction to BHR

No curriculum is appropriate for every institution, depending on several factors such as contextual specificities and past studies and experiences of students. Nonetheless, some learning outcomes for a BHR course at undergraduate level were consistently highlighted as being the most important within the set of conducted interviews. Even though this does not prevent courses from having other secondary positive outcomes, the main learning outcomes identified are shortlisted here.

A first learning outcome would be to create an understanding of what human rights are, how business activities can have an impact on human rights and the environment, either positively or negatively, and what questions human rights pose for companies.

A second learning outcome would be to raise students' awareness that human rights and, more broadly, sustainability issues are relevant for companies and are practical and operational concerns that must be managed to protect the environment and rights holders, comply with existing standards, and avoid reputational risks, which ultimately hurt the business' bottom line. Students should become comfortable with transferring their knowledge on the relevance of BHR for their work as managers to others (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023).

A third learning outcome would be to develop a broader perspective on the role of business in society and a different business framework that goes beyond the classic shareholder primacy mindset, by looking at the long-term scenarios and the repercussions of each decision for all stakeholders. This outcome would be achieved if, by the end of the course, students looked to the world in a different way and would naturally have thoughts such as 'what would this decision mean to an indigenous person living next to the mine' instead of solely thinking 'how is this going to affect our company in terms of risk and loss of income' when faced with a fictitious business decision (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023). For this, it would be important that the students apprehend the mutual influence between the context where the business is operating, which is characterised by particular social and environmental challenges, and business operations (E2, personal communication, May 11, 2023).

A fourth learning outcome would be for students to gain an understanding of international frameworks such as the UNGPs and the OECD Guidelines and the corporate responsibility to protect human rights that stems from them. Even though there are critiques to be done to the UNGPs, they followed 'an approach that companies can work with' (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023) and it is crucial that students understand how companies have applied or are applying the UNGPs and what changes they are doing in their strategies, operations and supply chains to manage human rights risks effectively.

A fifth learning outcome would be for students to acquire the necessary terminology for them to be able to conceptualise problems and address them in the course of their practical work, as well as to get familiarised with the tools that companies have to identify and manage human rights impacts - some of them mainstream management tools that can be reinterpreted in a way that is more respectful of the rights holders and the environment,

namely, human rights policies, human rights and environmental due diligence and impact assessments, stakeholder engagement, risk and impact measuring and reporting, and grievance mechanisms. The course should also develop the ability of anticipating if certain items will become of relevance from a human rights perspective and if any measure is necessary to address it.

In the end of taking an introduction to BHR, students should be able to look at an example and think practically about what they would do in that situation, by (i) identifying if there are any human rights risks or value creation opportunities in the company's global supply chain; (ii) identifying the key stakeholders in that particular situation; (iii) evaluating the human rights risks and the best way of addressing them in collaboration with the different stakeholders; and (iv) critically coming up with solutions and concrete actions that companies could take.

One of the recommendations that came out of the 'Best Practice for Human Rights education in Universities in the Western Balkans' report produced in the context of the EU co-funded project 'Higher Education Action for Rights Teaching' in relation to the skills that should be acquired by students in Human Rights courses was that these skills should be critical thinking and other transferable skills, rather than skills that are particularly useful for a single specific career (HEART, 2013). In short, all of the abovementioned learning outcomes would contribute to a broad learning outcome that would enable students to critically look at business operations from a human rights lens, and develop autonomy in navigating the human rights discourse and dealing with human rights issues later on (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023), therefore being aligned with this recommendation.

Case studies and other engaging teaching methods

In general, any strategy that engages students may be seen as a productive teaching strategy. With young students, as it is the case of undergraduate students, it is easier to capture their attention if a wide range of teaching methods other than the classic lectures and classroom discussions, which are important for transmitting theoretical knowledge, are used. Establishing a clear connection between what is being learnt in the classroom and what is happening in the real world is key, so that students do not feel like they are in an 'isolated classroom bubble' (J. Schrempf-Stirling, personal communication, April 17, 2023) and can really grasp the relevance and applicability of the subject.

Some strategies that get students engaged are case studies ‘on companies that students are familiar with, companies that make products that students use, and industries with which students are most familiar’ (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023). For instance, a case study about Tik Tok or Nike might be more easily grasped by today's undergraduates than a case study on a company that sells products that the students might not be familiar with. Business students seem to respond well to examples and cases, which are useful to illustrate more abstract concepts such as human rights due diligence in practice and make it easier for them to understand the immediate practical relevance of BHR topics. Almost all interviewees referred to the use of cases as a core teaching method in which students are put ‘in the shoes of business managers on the ground and have to make decisions about how to address a real-world issue’ (A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023). This can help students understand how business issues can be framed as human rights issues. For instance, how negotiating with the local community to get access to land for an extractive project can be reframed as respecting the rights of indigenous peoples (A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023). Nonetheless, cases should not only serve to draw out lessons for the future, but also to be an entry point for deeper conceptual reflections and it is important to ‘not just stick at the surface with kind of a practical case discussion which does not produce any kind of deeper conceptual takeaways’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023). Students can be asked to prepare beforehand as a way of stimulating a deeper discussion.

In Business schools there is commonly the expectation of ‘going to cases and examples right from the get-go’ (R. Chambers, personal communication, June 6, 2023) and that ‘what is not immediately practically applicable is not relevant knowledge’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023), which might be problematic because University is not just about providing students with instruments and tools, but also stimulating deeper reflection about the world. Undergraduate students, in particular, ‘are very keen on learning things that they see are not completely removed from what is happening in practice’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023) and rapidly associate conceptual or philosophical thinking as something that is not relevant for business practice. As this is the tendency, conceptual takeaways can be presented ‘with an air of practical applicability’, for instance, by connecting it to a practical case ‘even at the very superficial level’ or ‘having a few pictures of companies on the slides and just kind of [highlighting] what that could mean potentially for a company in practice’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023). That way, students feel that what they are learning is very practical, even though that

might not be the case. Graduate students are more demanding, probably due to their work experiences and familiarity with the way companies work in practice, and more sophisticated techniques need to be used in this regard (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023).

When analysing a case, students may be asked to identify which human rights are in question, who is responsible for their protection, what the human rights risks and opportunities for the company are, and what the company can do. If the company's approach is known, students can also analyse if it was the best approach and what were the implications for its various stakeholders, as well as compare it with the approach of companies that were successful in dealing with these challenges. Most of the cases mentioned by interviewees are relatively recent real cases, to show the students BHR issues are important and 'can surface in very known cases that you can read about in newspapers' (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023). Some examples of cases mentioned by the interviewees were the Rana Plaza accident, the Nevsun case in Eritrea, the Lafarge case in Syria, the TOTAL case in Uganda, and the Vinci case in Qatar. Even though they are very complex cases, it is possible to reduce their complexity for undergraduate students and 'pack them into a short case with clear learning objectives that can be done in three hours' (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023). One way of doing so may be reducing the legal complexity of the case and focus more on the business strategy, operational aspects and human rights and environmental due diligence, based on the UNGPs.

Project-based learning is appreciated by students. Some of the examples mentioned were the analysis of statements on human rights included in companies' financial reports, a qualitative research study involving interviews with a company on their responsible practices, and the analysis of a company's modern slavery statement according to the criteria designed by the NGO Wikirates in order to determine if the statement contains all the necessary information to fulfil its goals. An embodied type of learning through simulations and role-playing exercises, where students are asked to be advisors of a company or have specific roles within a company (e.g. CEO, CFO, etc.) seems to also be an effective approach for teaching BHR. An example of this would be group work in which students are given fictionalised examples of oftentimes real human rights dilemmas a company had to deal with for them to role-play (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023) or the simulation of the implementation of a human rights due diligence process.

Another popular device that illustrates the practical relevance of studying BHR is to bring in practitioners from companies, governments, IGOs or NGOs to guest lecture sharing

experiences from the ground and how they deal with BHR issues in real life. These are great opportunities for students, who may ask questions on how everything they learn may or is actually done in practice, and notice how the practical experiences shared by the guest lecturer connect with the conceptual points covered in class, which is also helpful to make them understand why conceptual discussions are important (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023).

When it comes to the assigned readings, the recommended journal articles should be as up to date as possible and attached to the ongoing academic conversation. However, it might help to provide undergraduate students with different types of resources with various lengths, and not only journal articles, which might be a bit challenging for them (L. Bianchi, personal communication, May 3, 2023). Other resources that might be used are NGO reports, UN documents, newspaper articles, testimonies from groups affected by corporate activities, documentaries or multimedia, which seems to be effective in capturing the attention of generations versed in media (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023). The awareness test⁴¹ is an example of a video that can be used for the students to quickly understand that ‘it is easy to miss something you are not looking for’⁴² and that human rights is an issue to which they must be attentive when doing business, because they can very easily go under notice (J. Schremppf-Stirling, personal communication, April 17, 2023). Contemporary news articles may also be brought to class to spark discussions, especially if a big event or a BHR polemic happens during the time the course is being taught. Additionally, it was explicitly mentioned by some interviewees that consulting the resources of the Business and Human Rights Resource Center should be encouraged for students to be up-to-date on BHR developments and to see what comes up when they search for companies of their choice, even if they did not previously associate them with human rights violations. Presenting research projects where the Professor was directly involved can also be a way to engage students more, because some personal storytelling can be made (L. Bianchi, personal communication, May 3, 2023).

Furthermore, communication-focused exercises are recommended, since public speaking and persuasion skills are critical for business. One example could be a presentation for the class on a reading and the dynamization of a small debate on the topic, which

⁴¹ The awareness test consists of two teams playing basketball in which the viewer is asked to count the passes of one of the teams. Meanwhile, a man in a bear costume does the moonwalk through the court, but usually people only see it in the second round, when they are no longer counting the passes.

⁴² Sentence commonly added at the end of videos of the awareness test, such as the following one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ahg6qcgoay4>.

stimulates students to actively listen to their colleague's opinions and think critically to reach their own conclusion (R. Chambers, personal communication, June 6, 2023), or the presentation of a case resolution.

Content covered in the introduction to BHR

In trying to define core content to be covered for undergraduate students, interviewees commonly referred to the need to explain what human rights are and why they are important. A way for Business students, who have little or no background in Law, to grasp the concept of human rights, is by using a case study leading to a discussion on the issues that are raised and how they are connected to individual human rights. Another way is to use the UDHR or other international instruments such as the ICCPR or the ICESCR as a starting point and the discussion to be centred around which rights relate to business operations. Even though labour rights will most likely to be mentioned first, eventually it will become evident to students that potentially all human rights might be impacted (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023). A third option would be an exercise for students to reflect on the concept of human rights, namely, to provide a basic definition of several human rights taken from the UDHR. Students could be paired and asked to come up with one example in which a company perpetrates a right and one in which a company facilitates the enjoyment of that right. Specific categories of rights might be explained. It is particularly relevant to highlight that human rights are not 'all about legal officers or tribunals or something that happens in China but does not happen in the UK' (L. Bianchi, personal communication, May 3, 2023) or that not only they relate to torture or slavery but also to day-to-day things such as having a minimum wage and not being discriminated against (E2, personal communication, May 11, 2023). One of the recommendations that came out of the 'Best Practice for Human Rights education in Universities in the Western Balkans' report was for Professors to expose students to multiple definitions and interpretations of human rights, not restricting themselves to its legal definitions, and to acknowledge that there is a debate towards which various disciplines contribute to, which is broader than the one possible to cover in the course (HEART, 2013).

The UNGPs were most commonly referred to as the starting point for BHR courses in Business schools, since 'they have been designed having management processes against the backdrop of existing management processes such as risk management and other internal processes' (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023). During an interview conducted on April 14, 2023, Professor Bjorn Fasterling has singled out that the easiest way

of starting to teach human rights to Business students is to introduce the concept of human rights and environmental due diligence, ‘from a very purely practical, pragmatic, operational perspective’ and to explain human rights along the way, for instance, by framing problems identified by the students as human rights issues and speak about the content of human rights when discussing human rights risks. Providing an overview of the three pillars of the UNGPs and the differentiated responsibilities of States and companies is essential (E1, personal communication, April 24, 2023).

Afterwards, one might speak about key developments that followed the UNGPs, such as the emerging MREDD laws and regulations at the domestic level and the implications for businesses operating in those countries since students are going to have to navigate the legal landscape and understand and anticipate legal obligations (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2023). Some basic knowledge of general principles of International Human Rights Law, such as the main treaties and covenants or the difference between a declaration and a convention or between voluntary mechanisms and legally binding ones might also be useful (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023), but the nuances of International Law are not for a BHR course lectured to undergraduate Business students (R. Chambers, personal communication, June 6, 2023). For business school students, it is important not to focus too much on the legal aspect of BHR but rather on the managerial aspect and the human aspect, especially for undergraduates (B. Knaak, personal communication, April 24, 2023).

Students must learn what companies are expected to do in line with the UNGPs, such as having a human rights policy commitment, having human rights and environmental due diligence processes in place, having a code of conduct for suppliers, engaging in stakeholder consultations, reporting, *inter alia*. It is crucial that students are taught that human rights and environmental due diligence requires a shift of perspective from looking at the material risks for the company to looking at the risks to rights holders and so there is a danger attached to using existing risk management systems and merely ‘plugin this human rights piece’ instead of having a free-standing human rights and environmental due diligence process, which has proved to led companies to perform better (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023). However, before discussing the responsibility of a corporation it is important students have already reflected on what is a corporation in the first place and learned about corporate governance structures (E1, personal communication, April 24, 2023).

In terms of human rights issues, it is difficult to say which to prioritise because they are all potentially relevant and it might be dangerous to focus on one specific human rights issue since ‘what might be more relevant for a sector or company may not be for the other

one’ (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2023). If specific issues are emphasised, there is ‘the risk of potentially detracting the attention of companies from other human rights issues that might be more salient to them’ (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2023). So, in line with the UNGPs, there should be made clear ‘the importance of looking at salient risks, which vary depending on the companies and the sectors, and prioritise based on the saliency of the risk’ (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2023). Given time constraints, it will never be possible to speak in detail about each human right, so the point would be to present ‘there is a whole array of human rights and in particular internationally recognised human rights that can be affected and are indeed affected in practice by corporate practices and operations’ (E4, personal communication, April 13, 2023). Some case studies should be presented to illustrate the full spectrum of human rights issues and transmit the broad idea that, in each sector, there is a range of human rights issues that can be created or exacerbated by businesses and that businesses must be context-setting sensitive when defining their strategies. To show the diversity of human rights issues that might be connected to companies, the Professor could present, for instance, ‘three very different examples of how human rights relate to business operations using classic supply chain issues such as child labour, human rights challenges related to the tech industry and [the Professor] could also make a third example of how business operations are linked to greenhouse emissions and climate change directly or indirectly and how this also affects human rights to show that sustainability is a vague but all-encompassing concept and that everything is connected’ (L. Feld, personal communication, April 13, 2023). After a BHR introduction, a structure that ‘works quite well for students and also for the lecturer’ is to structure the course around specific functions in relation to human rights or specific industries, approaching regulations, the main problems of the industry, and some approaches that have been taken to address those problems (B. Knaak, personal communication, April 24, 2023). For instance, when it comes to the different functions, students might be asked to brainstorm on issues characteristic to Human Resources, Finance, or any other function and try to connect them to human rights and the articles of the UDHR or of one of the two Covenants (E2, personal communication, May 11, 2023).

When it comes to the issue of human rights violations in global supply chains, it is important to show students that human rights abuses are often associated with the supply chain, and it is thus important to establish connections between the focal companies and their supply chain partners. For instance, students can try to look at a product and trace back ‘what is included in the creation of this product or service and to map potential human rights risks

along the value chain’ (B. Knaak, personal communication, April 24, 2023), focusing first on the upstream and then on the downstream supply chain, in short, ‘what happens to people along the way, at the place where the materials are extracted, at the place where they are processed, at the place where they are finished, worked on in factories, and then put into the final part of the supply chain’ and what impacts do business operations have where the materials are being sourced from, such as issues connected to extraction and deforestation (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023). When studying corporate responses to address business and human rights issues, it is important to discuss cases of human rights abuses and equally relevant to focus on solutions and analyse innovative approaches to address human rights risks. Generally, it is hard to single out an individual company as best practice. Some companies are certainly more advanced than others, and usually it is a combination of approaches that work (B. Knaak, personal communication, April 24, 2023).

After a robust foundational introduction, more specific topics can be introduced. Some that were mentioned were (i) accountability mechanisms, both judicial or non-judicial, and how and when could civil society groups and others use each of them to hold companies accountable, as well as a reflection on their effectiveness; (ii) DEI in the workplace; (iii) social and environmental justice and the connection between human rights and the environment; (iii) the rights of indigenous people; (iv) climate change and human rights; (v) a “just transition” to clean energy; (vi) the role and specific responsibilities of investors and the financial sector; (vii) alternative business models (cooperatives, certified B corporations, employee stock ownership programmes, etc.); (viii) social media and the internet and its impacts on human rights; (ix) biodiversity; (x) community investment and development; (xi) life below water and the connection between the oceans and human rights, (xii) sexual harassment at the workplace; (xiii) social auditing and assurance; (xiv) artificial intelligence and human rights; and (xv) contemporary aspects of implementing the UNGPs, such as the UN treaty process. The content of the courses should be adapted to what would be more interesting for the specific group of students, or what they are most likely to come in contact with (E. Umlas, personal communication, May 18, 2023). It can also be adapted if a big event for the BHR movement happens during the time the course is being taught, as would be the case of the war between Russia and Ukraine, the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar or the 10th anniversary of the Rana Plaza accident (L. Bianchi, personal communication, May 3, 2023). As such, this is just a list of candidates to topics to be covered, from which we can highlight as absolute core at least climate change, given the urgency of the having more and more people trying to come up with solutions to address it.

Localising Business and Human Rights matters might make courses more relevant to students, for instance, by linking international paradigm cases to the local context, giving emphasis to locally prominent issues and cases, considering the domestic and regional law framework besides international legal standards, studying the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights and inviting local business representatives to guest lecture (Ewing, 2021). However, no interviewee mentioned focusing particularly in the local context.

It is a relevant question whether the terminology used should derive from universal standards. In Business schools, human rights issues are often not named as human rights issues. Even though there has to be a bit of flexibility to adapt to the audience, it seems logical to be specific and outspoken and use the terminology that is adopted in the UNGPs considering this document is the foundational text and authoritative standard of the field. The benefit of using human rights terminology is that human rights are enshrined in treaty instruments that are signed by the vast majority of States and this guarantees a different normativity and also ‘a different urgency to do something’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023). Human rights is a ‘more legitimate lens or set of standards that a manager could draw on in order to change business practices or culture’ (E2, personal communication, May 11, 2023). Furthermore, human rights standards provide ‘tangible criteria that companies can then apply in their policies, in their interactions with suppliers’, for instance, criteria to distinguish legal work done by children and prohibited forms of child labour (L. Feld, personal communication, April 13, 2023). Another important consequence is that it helps unframing human rights as something that addresses States and is in the realm of political science and international law and ‘that does not belong to business’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023). Human rights can be covered by other terms, such as sustainability or corporate responsibility, but there’s a risk of watering down the particular meaning of business and human rights if it is not framed as such, and of talking around the actual issues (B. Knaak, personal communication, April 24, 2023).

Challenges to the advancement of BHR education and ideas on how to overcome them

In this final section, it is relevant to discuss some of the challenges preventing BHR education from advancing further. Even though challenges are, of course, contextual, the ones referred to in this section seemed somehow to be familiar to all the interviewees.

Firstly, the multidisciplinary nature of the subject may be making it difficult for traditional academic curricula to accommodate it, since ‘many academic institutions, and their incentive

structures, are organised around traditional disciplines. Faculty members seeking tenure must publish the right articles in the right academic journals’ (A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023), which are the most influential or the highest ranked in 10 year reviews journals. Even though the Cambridge Business and Human Rights Journal has been created, and other influential journals have started to publish research on BHR topics, this incentives’ structure might dissuade those who want to do research and teach in a more multidisciplinary and recent field such as BHR. In many geographies where BHR affects local rightsholders, institutions tend to have very traditional academic environments and it can be very difficult for young scholars in these countries to propose a BHR course that does not fit within the existing curriculum (A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023).

Furthermore, in undergraduate degrees ‘there is a very big core [of courses] that Business schools consider that Management students have to have done and that leaves very little space for other things’ (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023). The solution would be for Business schools to be less rigid in the definition of that core for students to put together their own study programme according to their own interests and career intentions, allowing them to take a variety of courses in a variety of specialisations.

Logistically, creating new courses is complicated. For instance, when the creation of a new course implies that the proposing Professor is taken out of its current teaching, it is necessary to undergo a process to find people to cover the course that Professor is to leave (E1, personal communication, April 24, 2023). Additionally, whenever a new course is proposed in a congested syllabus, ‘the Programme Directors have to decide which course leaves, so if [a Professor wants] to convince them to make more room for BHR, for example, [they] have to also propose what course is not necessary’ (B. Fasterling, personal communication, April 14, 2023). As mentioned before, this implies advocacy work and engaging in internal struggles with other Faculty members, not just the ones that teach the core courses, but also the ones that teach different perspectives on corporate responsibilities, to justify your existence and see who has the most relevant perspective and deserves funding (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023). Every department advocates for their disciplines and research interests to be in the core and the Programme directors ‘are under a lot of pressure to include more and more, and there are only so many hours available in the core’ (T. Nelidov, personal communication, June 1, 2023).

Creating a BHR course therefore implies a lot of bureaucracy, requiring strong political will, the appreciation and approval of several bodies within the Business school and University, and ‘more than one or two people wanting change’ (E3, personal communication,

April 12, 2023). As such, ‘very often it is a long process of creating internal groups and networks, and then lobbying for a long time at the department level, then later at the school level, and then at the University level’ (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023). For that reason, it is important that a Professor who wants to develop a BHR course builds support for its cause by getting both internal and external allies. Reaching out to other Faculty members who are somehow like-minded is crucial to create strong bottom-up approaches together. Persuading other colleagues to support their stands may not always be easy because human rights still tends to be perceived by people from other Business disciplines as a legal subject or a subject extremely connected to CSR. However, establishing collaborations with colleagues from other departments might help steer the conversation among Faculty members of that department, as well as organising a masterclass to all faculty members about the relevance of BHR education, which can at least ‘conquer’ the Professors who are more receptive to new ideas (J. Schrempf-Stirling, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

To reach the end goal of creating a BHR course or embed BHR education across the curricula, it will be necessary to show there is traction and more people are getting interested and are collectively engaged in the process. Having an impact on research might increase a Faculty member’s standing and make their demands more powerful in the eyes of some Programme Directors (F. Wettstein, personal communication, April 28, 2023) but, in general, the more people are involved, the more powerful the message gets. This process may take several years, which prevents BHR Professors from finding outlets to teach and the content of Business degrees to change fast enough to reflect the increasing interest in BHR issues by students and prospective employers. Ultimately, its feasibility and the access to resources will depend on the top-down support at the level of the rectorate, the Dean of the School and Programme Directors being conquered. The generational change, the EDI agenda applied in the senior management of Business schools, and the debate around the decolonisation of the curriculum and including voices from different contexts, which is pretty big in the UK, might help changing the mindset among the senior management of Business schools towards the importance of having a different approach to the curriculum that does not focus so much on the mainstream profit maximisation theories (L. Bianchi, personal communication, May 3, 2023).

When it comes to designing the syllabus of a new BHR course, ‘there are lots of people already going through the same path, so [there is no] need to reinvent the wheel, just to look at what others have already done and add [a] contribution on top’ (E3, personal

communication, April 12, 2023). Resourcing to networks such as the Global Business and Human Rights Scholars Association, the GBSN for Business and Human Rights Impact, UN PRME or the Teaching BHR Forum may be useful for Professors trying to build new syllabus or making a case before their superiors on the importance of including BHR education in their institution. During an interview conducted on June 6, 2023, Professor Rachel Chambers, Co-Director of the Teaching BHR Forum, stated this Forum is a strong academic community that fosters the exchange of both subject matter knowledge, best practices in teaching and teaching materials. Members of these networks who have succeeded in introducing BHR courses at their respective institutions ‘mentor younger scholars who are seeking to teach BHR elsewhere, especially in geographies where it has never been taught before’ (A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023) and joint materials can be developed to then be adapted to the local contexts. Therefore, it would be useful to search for existing materials and guides developed by teaching networks, Business school networks or accreditation entities before trying to trigger processes for the existence of BHR education in a given Business school. The type of work that was done in this thesis, gathering experiences and systematising how to overcome the challenges faced by Professors seeking to advance BHR education could be replicated at a larger scale and with more data by one of these entities.

As aforementioned, some factors that can help build a stronger case to then advocate for BHR education are the demands of accreditation and business schools networks and the corporate demand for graduates that know how to navigate BHR issues. The future pressure of accreditation and rankings will be key to sensitise these Faculty members. However, first accreditation needs to become much more demanding - instead of merely asking for impact in society, they should explicitly mention human rights in their discourse and establish specific thresholds for Business schools to fulfil, making it more difficult for their requirements to be open to interpretations and ignored by someone who does not see human rights as a priority in Business schools (L. Bianchi, personal communication, May 3, 2023). As such, Professors can and should advocate for these institutions to put more pressure on Business schools. The same applies to prospective employees. The private sector can play a big role in supporting BHR education where they are operating, especially considering they have been doing a lot of in-house training on their human rights policies and commitments worldwide. Therefore, ‘smart companies should devote some resources to promoting [BHR education] because companies, generally, are not expert teaching organisations, so supporting university BHR education ‘is an efficient way to help themselves create a pool of future employees who have been exposed to BHR issues’, so that they do not have to organise as many internal trainings

(A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023). If companies, when hiring from Business schools, require entry-level employees to have been exposed to BHR, ‘that would be a very powerful incentive for universities to (i) start teaching BHR if they do not already and (ii) make BHR a mandatory requirement or a core part of the curriculum’ (A. Ewing, personal communication, June 1, 2023). If advocacy is made for businesses to demand BHR courses and put pressure on Business schools to change the curriculum, that will be the biggest leverage for BHR education to start to be massively implemented. Another option would be to incentivise Business schools to engage directly with recruiters and ask them directly what needs they have and what type of graduates they see themselves hiring in the future - due to the growing societal and regulatory pressure on companies, the odds are that they will mention needing ‘more talent in climate change, human rights, community investment, stakeholder engagement’ (T. Nelidov, personal communication, June 1, 2023). In that scenario, it would be very difficult for Business schools not to listen to the employer’s opinions, especially if coming from industries that are particularly important for Business graduates, such as consulting, retail brand management, and investment, banking and finance (T. Nelidov, personal communication, June 1, 2023). Even though UN PRME is not an accreditation and there is a lot of discretion in terms of what Business schools should do after being its signatories, the existence of this UN initiative *per se* can be an argument in advocacy work for responsible management themes such as BHR to be incorporated in the curriculum, since it reiterates the importance of Business students to learn how to become responsible managers and shows more than 600 Business schools have, if not implemented, at least recognised that.

To be able to use the increasing student interest on the topic as a factor to build a stronger case to present to the Programme Directors, the students’ demand needs to be properly measured. A recommendation coming out of the HEART project was that students are included as active participants in the decision-making process and are asked directly their preferences for the curriculum through surveys or focus groups and stimulated to organise in student groups and extracurricular associations that facilitate them expressing their opinions in a bottom-up approach (HEART, 2013). However, even if it is confirmed there is an increasing student interest in sustainability and human rights, if that interest is not of 100% - and it will never be of 100% - some people may pose the question of ‘how to deal with the remaining percentage [of students] that are not excited about it’ (T. Nelidov, personal communication, June 1, 2023). However, the truth is that ‘students look to professors and the university to prioritise what they believe is important for the future of business and to help

them prepare to be successful business leaders’ (T. Nelidov, personal communication, June 1, 2023). As such, if Professors believe human rights are part of the equation of doing business, they should introduce students to them, under the penalty of ‘not really doing [their] job as management educators’ (T. Nelidov, personal communication, May 3, 2023). It would also be of importance to contact alumni and ask for their feedback on ‘what was useful in their Business school education and what was missing’ (T. Nelidov, personal communication, June 1, 2023) once they started working. Alumni advisory committees to the Business school could be a nice mechanism to get their input on a consistent basis. Ideally, the best would be to change the system around and that the rectorate and Programme Directors would ask to Professors what would they need to respond to the demands and questions of the classroom and how could the school help them to do better, which could be done, for instance, by arranging some training on issues such as climate change, circular economy or human rights.

When advocating for BHR education, the most important thing is to have an array of options of how it could be easily integrated into education from which the Institution to choose from. One option, as previously discussed, would be to introduce BHR sessions transversely across already existing courses. However, many Business school professors are not familiar with human rights and it may be difficult to ask them to introduce materials they are not experts in because they might not feel comfortable to change the way they are teaching or even feel offended (J. Schrempf-Stirling, personal communication, April 17, 2023). Even if they do take the challenge, that can lead to BHR subjects from being approached without critically calling out companies and the ongoing human rights violations linked to the business’ core operations (R. Chambers, personal communication, June 6, 2023). As such, if professors are new to the BHR topics and do not feel prepared to present on these topics in class themselves, they can invite either professors with experience in this field or experts as guest speakers to co-teach a course or offer a BHR-themed lecture (B. Knaak, personal communication, April 24, 2023). Additionally, inviting people from other institutions who are experts on the field to come lecture might also have a positive effect on bringing a case on the importance of the topic, especially if it mentions what is being done in terms of BHR education in their institution, sparking some competitiveness. However, some successful cases of Professors from traditional disciplines who started to include BHR or responsibility topics in their courses were shared, which shows that one will never know if other Professors are receptive to this exercise if it does not ask.

To conclude this chapter, we will now provide a systematic answer to research question number two, relative to the ideal implementation of BHR education in undergraduate Business degrees. The main findings of this chapter are the following: (i) incorporation of BHR education across the Business curricula is desirable for students to truly acquire a human rights lens when looking at Business scenarios; (ii) BHR education should be introduced either as mandatory course or included in mandatory courses, to ensure all Business students have contact with these topics; (iii) BHR should be taught using engaging teaching methods, and there should be an emphasis on the connection of BHR with the real-world; (iv) emphasis when teaching BHR concepts and definitions should be more practical rather than legal; (v) introducing a new interdisciplinary course that is not a current priority for Business schools requires advocacy efforts; (vi) the interdisciplinary and recent nature of the BHR field makes it more difficult for Professors of other disciplines to incorporate them in their courses; guest lecturers can be a solution to deal with this challenge.

Conclusion

As argued in this thesis, BHR education in Business schools play a crucial role in opening students eyes to how business operations connect to adverse human rights and environmental impacts, and the students' future responsibility in preventing and addressing such impacts. Ultimately, if applied in practice, BHR education leads students to being responsible managers, which most likely will have an impact in the decrease of adverse human rights and environmental impacts by companies. At the undergraduate level, it seems that having BHR education may result in a bigger level of interiorisation of the key message that business can benefit both its shareholders and its stakeholders, potentially resulting in a bigger impact. As such, one of our main arguments is that BHR education should take place as early as the students have enough business operational knowledge to grasp all the necessary concepts.

However, the uptake of BHR teaching in Business schools is lacking, with less than 1% of Business schools in the world seeming to have BHR education in place. In the ones that do, often it is taking place in elective courses and it is not incorporated across the undergraduate Business curriculum. Even when there is a Professor interested in developing a BHR course, there are multiple challenges that can hinder the advancement of BHR education. Some of our recommendations are to seek for internal and external allies and for the collaboration of Professors who went through the same process. Getting a BHR course approved requires a long routine of bureaucracy and advocacy work directed to the Dean and Programme Directors. The change of discourse from accreditation, the growing corporate demand for graduates who can navigate BHR frameworks, and the student demand for sustainability-related topics can be used as leverage points to bring a case on the importance of BHR education in Business schools. One should keep in mind that 'disruptive innovation never happens mainstream. It happens on the fringes and then eventually it becomes mainstream' (E3, personal communication, April 12, 2023).

We conclude by classifying the outcomes of this thesis in three: (i) a contribution to the advocacy work for the importance of incorporating BHR education in Business schools, particularly, at the undergraduate level, (ii) a characterisation of eight undergraduate BHR-related courses offered in seven Business schools, and (iii) a compilation of some thoughts and examples that could inspire the advancement of BHR education at the undergraduate level.

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Annex 1

These were the questions that were sent to the Professors that participated in ‘The Case for Human Rights in Business Education – A Tool Kit’ in a Google Forms:

1. Name, Email and Faculty.
2. Is your Faculty a signatory of the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education?
3. Is your Faculty a member of any Business schools network?
4. Please upload the syllabi of the stand-alone BHR courses or courses where BHR modules are incorporated in your Faculty.
5. When were the courses/ modules lectured for the first time? (e.g. Spring Semester of 2017/2018)
6. If this information is not in the syllabi, do the courses/ modules take place at the undergraduate level or graduate level?
7. If this information is not in the syllabi, are the courses/ modules elective or compulsory?
8. If this information is not in the syllabi, how many class hours and curricular units do the courses/ modules have?
9. Any other information you wish to share.

Annex 2

Verbs in Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Learning

Higher-Order Thinking Skills in Bloom's Taxonomy (HOTS) (Cognitive)
<p>Creating (<i>arranges, assembles, builds, collects, categorizes, combines, compiles, composes, constitutes, creates, constructs, devises, designs, develops, explains, generates, manages, modifies, organizes, plans, performs, proposes, rearranges, reconstructs, relates, reorganizes, revises, rewrites, specifies, synthesizes, writes</i>)</p>
<p>Evaluating (<i>appraises, appraises, argues, assesses, compares, concludes, contrasts, convinces, criticizes, critiques, decides, defends, describes, determines, discriminates, evaluates, explains, interprets, justifies, measures, ranks, rates, relates, reviews, scores, selects, standardizes, summarizes, supports, tests, validates</i>)</p>
<p>Analyzing (<i>analyzes, arranges, breaks down, categorizes, classifies, compares, connects, contrasts, deconstructs, detects, diagrams, deconstructs, differentiates, discriminates, distinguishes, divides, explains, identifies, illustrates, infers, integrates, orders, organizes, outlines, relates, selects, separates, structures</i>)</p>
Lower-Order Thinking Skills in Bloom's Taxonomy (LOTS) (Cognitive)
<p>Applying (<i>applies, calculates, carries-out, classifies, changes, completes, computes, constructs, demonstrates, discovers, dramatizes, employs, examines, executes, experiments, generalizes, illustrates, implements, infers, interprets, manipulates, modifies, operates organizes, outlines, predicts, prepares, produces, relates, shows, solves, uses</i>)</p>
<p>Understanding (<i>abstracts, arranges, articulates, associates, categorizes, clarifies, compares, computes, converts, defends, diagrams, differentiates, discusses, distinguishes, estimates, explains, extends, extrapolates, generalizes, gives, illustrates, infers, interprets, interpolates, matches, outlines, paraphrase, predicts, rearranges, reorders, rewrites, summarizes, transforms, translates</i>)</p>
<p>Remembering (<i>cites, defines, describes, identifies, labels, lists, matches, names, outlines, quotes, recalls, recognizes, reproduces, retrieves, selects, shows, states, tabulates, tells</i>)</p>

Source: Torres et al. (2020)