DOI: 10.2478/jtes-2023-0016

Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability,
vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 60–75, 2023

Integrating Sustainability Into Curriculum of Legal Education in Latvia: An Insight Into the Main Issues

Inga Jekabsone
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6473-2652
Riga Technical University, Riga, Latvia

Laura Ratniece
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7569-5773
University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands

Abstract

For the last few decades, there has been an ongoing academic debate about the integration of sustainability into the curricula of higher education institutions to address various global challenges. Legal education is no exception. Taking into consideration that the new generation of legal professionals will be responsible for the development of regulations as well as for advocating for the individuals' interests related to global issues, they need to be equipped with knowledge and skills to tackle these complex problems effectively. In this context, teachers[1] play a crucial role, since they can instill in their students a sense of responsibility towards the future generations. The aim of this paper is to analyze how the concept of sustainability can be integrated into the curriculum of legal education in general and in Latvia in particular. To achieve the aim, the following research methods are used: legal analysis to examine the meaning and the place of the concept of sustainability in the context of legal education in Latvia and a scientific literature review to investigate the concept of sustainability in the context of integrating it into the curriculum of legal education. The main conclusions of the article: the future strategy for law schools and law faculties in Latvia should involve the incorporation of sustainability into the learning outcomes of law programs and specific courses, teaching strategies, and research opportunities for students; also, by broadening interdisciplinarity of the programs and involving students in collaboration with various stakeholders to promote sustainable development.

Keywords: Curriculum, legal education, sustainability, sustainable development, teachers' education.

[1] The term "teacher(s)" is used in a broader sense (including elected and non-elected academic staff at higher education institutions).

Introduction

The legal education plays a crucial role in anthropogenic environmental changes since the graduates of law programs are future lawyers, policy-makers and judges. Therefore, there is an urgent need to incorporate the principle of sustainability in legal studies to make sure that future law practitioners will be able to contribute to the fight against diverse challenges, including the climate crisis. According to Dernbach (2011), law schools need to play a leading role in the national and global effort to achieve sustainability.

In general, there are many studies that indicate the necessity to re-structure the curriculum of higher education institutions towards sustainability (e. g., Gadotti, 2009; Barth, & Rieckmann, 2012; Rieckmann, 2012; Weiss & Barth, 2019; Gavinolla et al., 2022). It is argued that higher education institutions must develop sustainability-related graduation criteria or required core courses to guarantee that all students get a fundamental understanding of sustainability (Calder & Dautremont-Smith, 2009). In addition, scholars admit that sustainability and sustainable development cannot be disconnected from the mainstream curriculum but must be integrated across all subject areas and stand in conjunction with previously taught material (Weybrecht, 2013; Annan-Diab & Molinari, 2017).

Regarding legal education, there are many directions on how the concept of sustainability may be integrated into law schools and law faculties. Dernbach (2011a) suggests that law schools can integrate sustainability into curriculum, research, buildings and operations, community outreach and service, student life, institutional mission, policy and planning. In turn, Rodiņa (2020) has pointed out three main directions on how sustainability may be incorporated into the curriculum of higher education institutions: institutional, content-related, and results-related. At the same time, only a comparatively small number of research articles examine the integration of sustainability into the curriculum of legal education[2]. In addition, there are hardly any academic studies on integrating the concept of sustainability into the curriculum of legal education in Latvia. Moreover, there is a lack of an analysis of the relevant legal framework. Regarding the legal education in Latvia, lately, the academic and professional debate has focused mainly on the quality of legal education and the professional qualification exam (see, e. g., Medina, 2023; Ziemele, 2023; Matule, 2022; Rodiņa, 2021; Medina & Salinieka, 2020); thus, many other issues, including the integration of sustainability, have been hardly addressed. Thereby, within this paper, the authors focus on this research gap, namely, the integration of sustainability into the curriculum of legal education in Latvia and the main issues related to Latvia. It must be emphasized that this paper provides only an introduction to this topic and highlights only some of the main issues.

Considering the aforementioned, the authors have formulated the following research questions: In what ways may the concept of sustainability be incorporated into the curriculum of legal education? What are some of the main issues of integrating the concept of sustainability in legal education in Latvia?

The aim of this paper is to analyze how the concept of sustainability can be integrated into the curriculum of legal education in general and in Latvia in particular.

---

[2] The scientific literature review supporting this argument is provided in the section "The Sustainability Into the Curriculum of Legal Education: Scientific Literature Review".

In order to achieve this aim, the authors have formulated the following tasks:

1. to review the meaning of the concept of sustainability in the context of legal education in Latvia
2. to examine scientific literature on how the concept of sustainability can be integrated into the curriculum of law programs;
3. to outline the main issues regarding the integration of the concept of sustainability into legal education in Latvia in the context of the existing legal framework.

Within the paper, the authors conduct a scientific literature review to analyze recent studies of academic scholars on integrating the concept of sustainability within studies, particularly in law programs. This literature review aims to explore the methods and strategies employed in integrating sustainability into legal education curricula. A combination of keywords, such as "sustainability", "legal education", "curriculum integration", and related terms are used. The search encompasses databases like Web of Science, Scopus, ScienceDirect, LexisNexis, Westlaw, HeinOnline, academic journals, and relevant institutional repositories. The temporal scope focuses mainly on the last decade to capture recent developments in this evolving field. To ensure relevance and quality, inclusion criteria are established. Peer-reviewed articles, case studies, and reports addressing the intentional integration of sustainability concepts into legal education are included. Exclusion criteria are applied to filter out studies lacking clear methodological rigor, i.e., those not directly related to the integration of sustainability within legal curricula.

In addition, in order to reveal the meaning of the concept of sustainability in the context of legal education in Latvia, the authors analyze and interpret various primary legal sources, such as laws and the Cabinet of Ministers regulations, and the relevant secondary sources (e.g., academic publications). Legal interpretation was done by applying the legal interpretation methods – grammatical, systematic, teleological and historical. Regarding the secondary sources, it has to be noted that there are not many secondary sources on this particular topic in Latvia. The analysis is therefore mainly based on the authors' interpretation of the legal norms. Overall, the legal analysis aims to investigate the regulatory framework regarding the integration of sustainability into the curriculum of legal education in Latvia. As a result, the main issues of the integration of sustainability in legal education in Latvia are outlined.

In addition, a special concern is also devoted to the importance of teachers' education in the context of the integration of sustainability into the curriculum of legal programs, since they play a crucial role in educating and shaping future legal professionals.

The Meaning of the Concept of Sustainability

Nowadays, the concept of sustainability is widely used in various contexts. In Latvia, it has been suggested that the principle of sustainability is established in the Constitution (Rodiņa, 2020; Ratniks, 2022), and scholars have extensively discussed its meaning and role (Litvins & Gailīte, 2015), also within the context of higher education (Rodiņa, 2020, 2020a; Kahanoviča, 2021).

In order to be able to analyze and discuss how sustainability could be integrated into legal education, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of this concept. This section of the article will attempt to do that. As suggested by Briška & Siliņa-Jasjukeviča (2020):

> The incorporation of the ideas of S[sustainable] D[evelopment] into the general school curriculum is a challenge for schoolteachers and teacher educators because the concept of sustainable development is very complex and ambiguous. There is a risk that important concepts, values, and huge amounts of information can become cumbersome in the construction of SD without a deeper understanding and guidelines for implementation (Briška & Siliņa-Jasjukeviča, 2020, pp. 78–79).

Even though this comment is made in a different context (the general school curriculum), its core idea can be applied to higher education as well. Without understanding, and perhaps even setting the boundaries for the concept of sustainability in the context of legal education, it might be harder to integrate sustainability in legal education in a structured, meaningful and effective way.

Arguably, the starting point for exploring the meaning of the concept of sustainability could be the United Nations Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development "Our Common Future" (Brundtland Report), which provides a definition of the concept of "sustainable development". It states that:

> Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs (World Commission on Environment and Sustainable Development, 1987).

Although in this definition the focus is on sustainable development, it is possible to interpret it and state that sustainability in general means meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Similar meanings can be found in various dictionaries, pursuant to which "sustainability" means: 1) "the quality of being able to continue over a period of time" (Cambridge Online Dictionary, n.d.); 2) "the ability to continue or be continued for a long time" (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, n.d.); 3) capability "of being sustained" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, n.d.). Furthermore, in the context of environment, the term means "the quality of causing little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time" (Cambridge Online Dictionary, n.d.) or "the use of natural products and energy in a way that does not harm the environment" (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, n.d.).

Salkin (2015) has proposed a working definition on "sustainable legal education" – "ensuring that the law school is meeting the needs of the current generation of law students as well as meeting obligations to the community and to the profession, while ensuring resources for future generations" (Salkin, 2015, p. 376). This definition seems to be based on the Brundtland definition.

Although the Brundtland definition seemingly encompasses and reflects the key components of the concept of sustainability, it does have its shortcomings. As indicated by Ross (2009), the Brundtland definition is "vague and imprecise" (Ross, 2009, p. 34), as "[m]ost interpretations of sustainable development work within the Brundtland formula but vary in relation to the emphasis placed on each of the three components of sustainable development: economy, environment, society" (Ross, 2009, p. 34). This is an important issue which should be taken into account when considering integrating sustainability in legal education. One of the ultimate questions that those who are in

charge of curricula would have to decide upon is how the attention to the previously mentioned three components would be divided and which (if any) of the elements would prevail. In practice, this might result in a situation in which sustainability is understood and thus integrated, differently in the curricula of different law programs. A unifying factor perhaps could be the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015) which provide a focus on concrete issues. However, again the choice and interpretation of those elements would depend on each individual higher education institution.

When considering if and how to integrate sustainability in legal education, it is necessary to explore if any laws provide any guidance on the meaning of the concept of sustainability. Explicit (or perhaps even implicit) references to sustainability in laws might ease the process of integrating it in the syllabus of a study course. Also, as neither the Brundtland definition, nor the definitions in dictionaries are legally binding, a legal definition, therefore, might be helpful.

Pursuant to the fourth point of Article 1 of the Environmental Protection Law (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 2006), sustainable development is:

> the integrated and balanced development of public welfare, the environment and economy, which meets the present social and economic needs of inhabitants and ensures the compliance with environmental requirements, not endangering the possibility to meet the needs of the future generations, as well as ensures the preservation of biologic diversity.

It can be noted that this definition addresses the previously mentioned comment by Ross (2009) regarding the Brundtland definition. Namely, this norm specifically states that the development of public welfare, the environment and the economy have to be "integrated and balanced". It means that pursuant to the grammatical interpretation of this legal norm, none of the three components should be given priority, and this must be respected if issues related to sustainability are integrated into the curricula of law programs (or any other study programs).

The Environment Protection Law provides a definition of education for sustainable development as well. The fifth point of Article 5 states that:

> [education for sustainable development is] education which promotes the possibilities of each individual to obtain knowledge, values and skills necessary for the participation in the taking of decision regarding individual or collective activities at the local and world level in order to improve the quality of life at present without causing threats to the needs of the future generations.

In the discussion of integrating sustainability in legal education, this definition plays an important role, as it indirectly suggests how the education progress should be organized and what kind of teaching approaches could be chosen. More specifically, as the definition includes skills as well, it is necessary to organize the study process in such way which offers students learning activities that would help to develop and train these particular skills (mere listening to lectures will not be sufficient). However, at the same time it has to be pointed out that it is not clear what kind of specific skills would have to be developed and trained. The legal norm provides an open regulation ("(…) skills necessary for the participation in the taking of decision (…)") which needs to be interpreted.

The Sustainability Into the Curriculum of Legal Education: Scientific Literature Review

As has briefly been indicated in the introduction, the issue of integrating sustainability specifically into legal education is not widely discussed among scholars. This section will aim to summarize the existing opinions and provide suggestions for further research (in particular in the context of Latvia).

First, it is necessary to discuss why there is a need to incorporate sustainability into the curriculum of legal education. In this context, Dernbach (2011a) analyses the main outside and inside drivers that are pushing law schools to integrate sustainability into the curriculum. As outside drivers, clients, universities, non-governmental institutions and government are highlighted. In turn, bar associations, law firms and other law organizations are listed as inside drivers for sustainability. All these stakeholders recognize the importance of addressing sustainability challenges within the legal profession and society as a whole. Mainly, they advocate for the integration of values and aspirations of sustainable development into legal studies to make sure that future legal professionals can provide legal advice on environmental compliance, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable business practices as well as develop legal frameworks for achieving sustainability goals.

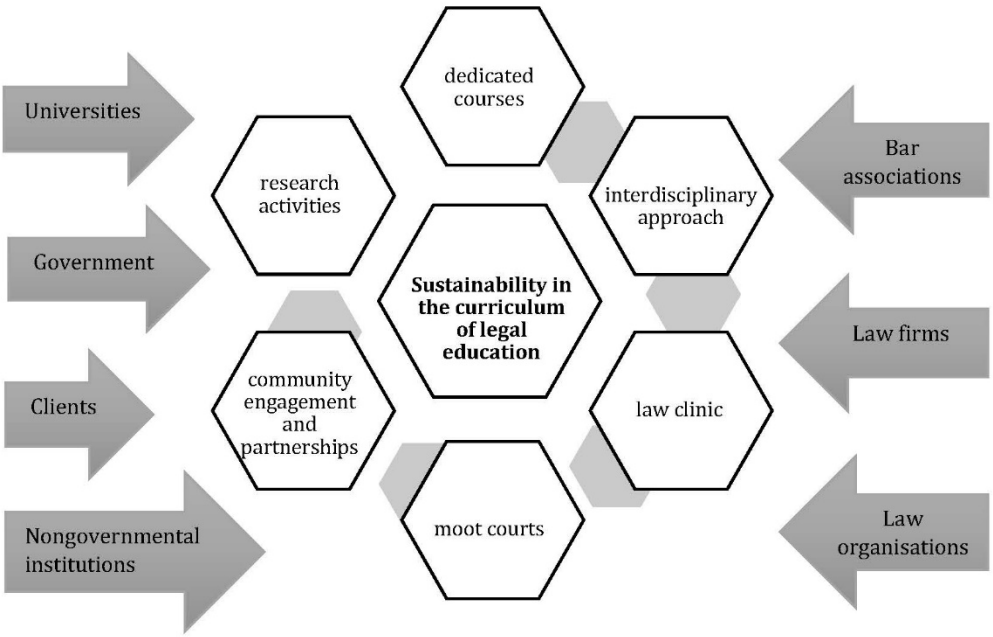
Perkins (2015) has highlighted the importance of sustainability in the legal profession, by stating that: "Sustainability's relevance to the legal profession is therefore primarily grounded in present and future needs to develop and apply laws to further sustainability's objectives, and in opportunities for lawyers to become innovators and leaders in the sustainability movement." (Perkins, 2015, p. 342).

Second, usually, the integration of sustainability into the curriculum starts from the incorporation of its dimensions into the strategy of higher education institutions. In this context, Poza-Vilches et al. (2023) analyzed how the missions, visions and values of Andalusian universities were linked with various dimensions of sustainability (social, environmental, personal and entrepreneurship). It was concluded that the principle of social responsibility dominated in incorporating into universities. Following this strategic planning approach, the dimensions of sustainability are incorporated into the curriculum.

Next, the authors analyze how the concept of sustainability may be incorporated into the curriculum in legal education (see Figure 1). Taking into account the various dimensions of sustainability, several scholars (e.g., Findler et al., 2019; Nhamo & Mjimba, 2020; Yoo & Jeon, 2022) argue that interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches in the development of study programs are the most successful in capturing the global challenges. Thereby, those law programs that involve courses from other disciplines like business, economics, sociology, politics, and the environment might better serve the sustainable development agenda. Another option would be to integrate elements of interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity in law courses themselves, without having courses from other disciplines. This approach would help students to connect legal principles with broader sustainability concepts as well as it develops a well-rounded perspective and encourages collaboration between legal professionals and experts from other fields.

Figure 1

Incorporation of the Concept of Sustainability in the Curriculum of Legal Education



Source: Developed by the authors based on the scientific literature review.

Continuing the discussion about the content of the courses to be provided within the legal studies, the scientific literature review has revealed that there are various disciplines of law, namely study courses or modules, where the incorporation of the concept of sustainability is necessary. Most often such legal fields as environment, natural resources, energy law, tax, corporate, property, international trade and securities regulations are listed (Dernbach, 2011a). For example, legal scholars debate about the integration of sustainability into land law since it deals with natural resources (Graham, 2014). Also, some legal scholars argue that the human rights doctrine is intensively relevant to environmental protection; however, it is not widely perceived (Bosselmann, 2016). Leone (2022) elaborates on the use of the "New Private Law Theory" for sustainable legal education. Furthermore, Calder and Dautremont-Smith (2009) suggest that higher education institutions should provide sustainability course development workshops based on the effective peer-to-peer methodologies pioneered in order to aid faculty in integrating sustainability into their teaching. As regards legal studies, such workshops could be organized for lecturers who represent similar areas of law, for example, contract law, commercial law, and civil law.

A different aspect of legal education is analyzed by Giddings (2014) where the clinical legal programs that are a part of the curriculum were examined in the context of promoting sustainability. In this study, the aspect of serving the needs of the community was highlighted. Furthermore, Nwendu (2019) argues that law student clinics enhance student professional responsibility, ethical consciousness and a sense of nobility in society at large that consequently promotes sustainability. Also, Owen (2020) has outlined the interaction between a law clinic and sustainability.

Then, various innovative teaching practices are discussed in the context of incorporating the principles of sustainability into the curriculum. For example, there are moot courts (Santana et al., 2019) where students have an opportunity to simulate negotiations centered around sustainability themes, inviting various stakeholders from the nongovernmental sector for seminars to address various sustainability issues (Du et al., 2013), service-learning approach to combine learning goals and community service to serve the sustainable development goals (Butin, 2010).

Finally, it is argued that it is necessary to encourage students in various research activities within the curriculum to explore sustainability-related issues and include them in their academic papers and projects (Brundiers et al., 2010). For example, there may be a requirement that topics of research papers and theses intend to analyze various sustainability issues from a legal perspective. In this case, the pedagogical framework as problem-based learning could be applicable for case studies and scenarios related to environmental law, climate change litigation, or sustainable business practices.

Selected Issues Related to Integrating Sustainability Into Legal Education in Latvia

This section will briefly outline some of the issues related to integrating sustainability into legal education in Latvia. These are listed below.

1. The lack of clarity regarding the place and role of sustainability in legal education in Latvia.
2. Issues related to the implementation of the mandatory requirement to include a course on environmental protection.
3. The lack of the requirement for a pedagogical education for academic staff.

The authors have identified these issues by analyzing the relevant legal acts and the scholarly literature described in the previous section of this paper.

Pursuant to Article 55(1^1) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 1995), study programs must comply with the classification of education in Latvia which is established in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 322 "On the Classification of Education in Latvia" (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 2017). These Regulations provide descriptions of learning outcomes that have to be achieved at the end of each education level. This is therefore a good starting point for the analysis of the place and role of sustainability in legal education in Latvia.

Although sustainability is not explicitly mentioned among the learning outcomes, it can be argued that it is implied. For example, the description of the competencies that need to be achieved in the Bachelor level studies states that a student needs to be able to "evaluate the impact of the professional activity on the environment" (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 2017). The description of the competencies that need to be achieved in the Master level studies requires a student to "demonstrate understanding and ethical responsibility of the impact of the research results or professional activity on the environment" (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 2017). This means that the issue of the impact of one's professional activity on the environment must be included in the curricula. However, it must be pointed out that the meaning and the scope of the concept of "environment" is unclear, and it requires interpretation. Pursuant to the principle of autonomy of higher education institutions (Article 4 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 1995), each institution has the autonomy to decide on the content of a study program and, consequently, on how and to what extent the topic

of impact on the environment is integrated. As the previously mentioned legal norms are applicable to higher education in general, it is necessary to examine if there are any specific regulations which would be applicable to the legal education.

A lawyer's profession in Latvia is regulated. In order to obtain a lawyer's qualification, it is necessary to pass the qualification exam which is uniform for all students (regardless of the higher education institution in which the studies have taken place). Therefore, another source for this research is Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 46 "Procedures for the Uniform State Professional Qualification Exam of a Lawyer" (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 2019). Pursuant to Article 1.1 of the Regulations, the content of the professional qualification exam derives from the lawyer's profession standard.

The lawyer's professional standard (VISC, 2020) does not contain any explicit references to sustainability. However, it is mentioned that a lawyer has to comply with the requirements for environmental protection (VISC, 2020, Section 3.7). This means that a lawyer has to work in an environmentally friendly manner, has to use resources rationally, and has to understand laws regulating environmental protection (VISC, 2020, Section 5.1). The requirements indicated in the lawyer's profession standard imply that the topic of environmental protection must be included in the curriculum. However, again, it is left to each higher education institution that offers a law program to decide how and to what extent this topic will be integrated into the curricula.

The previously mentioned allows concluding that there is a lack of clarity regarding the place and role of sustainability in legal education in Latvia. As the concept of sustainability or sustainable development is not directly mentioned among the learning outcomes of the educational levels, it leaves space for various interpretations and understandings. The authors of this paper suggest that the relevant legal framework should provide a more explicit regulation on this matter.

The principle of autonomy of higher education institutions leads to the next issue, which is the implementation of the mandatory course on environmental protection. Article 11 of Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 240 "On the State Academic Education Standard" (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 2014) states that Bachelor study programs should contain the requirements for syllabus stated in the Environmental Protection Law and Civil Protection Law. This means that pursuant to Article 42(2) of the Environmental Protection Law, "[a] course in environmental protection shall be included in the mandatory part of all study programs of higher education institutions and colleges". Pursuant to Article 23(1) of the Civil Protection and Disaster Management Law, a course on civil protection should be included in the general, vocation and higher education.

Regarding the incorporation of sustainability in higher education, Rodiņa (2020) has concluded that the approach that Latvia has chosen (and which is reflected in Article 42 of the Environment Protection Law) is very modern. Overall, Article 42 of the Environmental Protection Law can be evaluated positively. However, it can be questioned if the implementation of one mandatory course is sufficient to achieve the goal of ensuring that students are educated about sustainability and sustainable development. This is a question which should be considered.

The authors of this publication have surveyed the publicly available information on Bachelor programs in law (academic, full-time) in Latvia to analyze how the requirement of Article 42(2) of the Environmental Protection Law is fulfilled and how many credit points for such a course are awarded (University of Latvia, Riga Stradins University, Riga Graduate School of Law, Turiba University, Rezekne Academy of Technologies, EKA University of Applied Sciences, Daugavpils University). The survey of the publicly available information shows that, overall, the requirement is fulfilled.

Higher education institutions have implemented a course on environmental protection (either as an individual course or in combination with civil protection), and up to 3 ECTS are awarded for such a course.

Even if a course on environmental protection is given 3 ECTS, it is still less than 2 % of the total number of ECTS for a three-year academic Bachelor program (180 ECTS). It is understandable that higher education institutions might find it difficult to award more ECTS for this course (more ECTS would require more contact hours) because many other subjects need to be included in a study program. However, one could argue that the number of ECTS sends an indirect signal about the importance of the course. Personal observations of the authors of this paper show that students tend to underestimate the value of this course and tend to view it as something that is in the study program only because it is required by law. The authors of this paper suggest that it would be useful and necessary to research students' attitudes towards mandatory courses on environmental protection and civil protection.

Another interesting issue is that the state has set a minimum requirement for credit points for the course on civil protection, and that is 1.5 ECTS (see Article 4 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 716 "Minimum Requirements for the Content of the Mandatory Course in Civil Protection and the Content of Training Employees in Civil Protection" (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 2017a). No such requirement can be found for the mandatory course on environmental protection. Both situations can be evaluated negatively. If only 1.5 ECTS are set as the minimum requirement, it might be perceived as a signal that the subject is not important and that it is included in the study program just because it is mandatory to do so. If there is no requirement for a minimum number of ECTS at all, it is not good either, as it gives the freedom to higher education institutions to allocate the minimum number of ECTS to the course (thus, again, indirectly implying that the subject is less important). The fact that there are hardly any formal requirements regarding the course on environmental protection may lead to various approaches towards the implementation of this course. The authors suggest that it might be useful to conduct a further research to examine the full impact of the lack of uniform formal requirements regarding the environmental protection course.

The third issue that is analyzed in this section is related to the lack of the requirement for a pedagogical education for academic staff. It is widely argued (see, e.g., Sunthonkanokpong and Murphy, 2019; Koskela & Karkkainen, 2021; Goller & Rieckmann, 2022; Zandvliet & Paul, 2023) that teachers are crucial to achieving sustainable development goal No 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations, 2015) of inclusive, equitable, high-quality education. This means that a particular attention needs to be devoted to the teachers' education. Pursuant to article 42(3) of the Environment Protection Law (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 2006), "[a] course in sustainable development shall be included in the study programmes for all teachers of higher education institutions and colleges". This means that everyone who studies to become a teacher has to take a course on sustainable development. Although this requirement can be evaluated positively, the problem is that it excludes academic staff members of higher education institutions.

Article 27(1) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 1995) provides that the academic staff consists of professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers, senior researchers, researchers and assistants. Representatives of all of these categories can be involved in the teaching process. In addition, there can be, e.g., visiting lecturers who can participate in teaching as well. If one looks at the requirements of, e.g., lecturers, then one can find that pursuant to

Article 36 of the Law on the Higher Education Institutions (Latvijas Vēstnesis, 1995), it is necessary to have either a Master or a PhD degree. This means that, in general, a person with a Master degree (e.g., Master degree in law) can be elected a lecturer and can be involved in the teaching process. As it has been outlined earlier, legal education in Latvia does not necessarily contain a strong component of sustainability. Consequently, it is highly likely that lecturers who have not studied issues related to sustainability during the Bachelor and Master studies, most likely will not be able to incorporate them in their own teaching practice. Also, it is worth noting that not every member of the present academic staff at higher education institutions has had the opportunity to follow the mandatory course on environmental protection, as the requirement for this course was introduced only in 2006 when the Environmental Protection Law was adopted, and the course itself could have been implemented throughout the following years.

If there was a mandatory requirement to have a pedagogical education for academic staff, then issues related to sustainability and sustainable development could be included in the relevant pedagogical courses, and in such a way it could be ensured that all academic staff members have studied them and are aware of them. Consequently, they might be more willing to integrate sustainability into their own study courses. Here it needs to be emphasized that by "pedagogical education" the authors do not necessarily mean full-time studies which lead to an academic or professsional degree. Such education could be offered in the form of, for example, short, tailormade courses. Also, such courses could be used as a platform for academic staff where ideas on how to incorporate sustainability in the teaching practice could be shared.

In this paper, the authors have outlined only three issues related to the integration of sustainability into the curriculum of legal education in Latvia. At the same time, there are many more possible problems that law schools and faculties might face. For example, Rodiņa (2020) has analyzed the interaction between the issues related to employment of academic staff and sustainability. Also, Varnava et al. (2010) have indicated several obstacles related to integrating sustainability into education. They mention, for example, such challenges like "already full curriculum, the irrelevance of ESD [education for sustainable development] to the subject, student hostility, lack of expertise and contradictions between espoused values and personal or institutional behaviour" (Varnava et al., 2010, p. 141). Also, the scholars indicate that faculty might define the curriculum too narrowly, law schools and law faculties as such are rather conservative and there is a perception that EDS is not really about law, but more akin to teaching citizenship (Varnava et al., 2010, p. 141). Arguably, some, if not all of these challenges could be identified in the legal education of Latvia as well. However, more in-depth research and empirical data would be needed to confirm this assumption.

Conclusions

Our research has revealed that legal education is crucial in terms of promoting sustainable development since future legal professionals will be in charge of creating rules and promoting citizens' rights in relation to global challenges related to sustainability.

As regards the incorporation of the sustainability concept into curricula of legal education, the scientific literature review has shown that there are various internal and external drivers that promote the integration of sustainability such as clients,

universities, non-governmental institutions, government as well as bar associations, law firms and other law organizations.

In turn, identifying the main directions or ways to integrate sustainability into curricula of legal education, legal scholars argue that it is necessary to introduce new courses devoted to issues of sustainability, incorporate the concept in existing law courses (e.g., human rights, property law, corporate law, etc.), integrate the sustainability in learning outcomes of law programs and specific courses. Also, this concept can be introduced through teaching strategies, namely by organizing moot courts, inviting guest speakers, etc. In addition, by offering research opportunities for students that involve analysis of global issues from the legal point of view, students may learn new perspectives. Finally, the interdisciplinarity of the law programs is highly appreciated among scholars in terms of sustainability. This approach ensures that future law professionals are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies to deal with global challenges.

As regards legal education in Latvia, the research has shown that, overall, there is a solid legal basis for integrating sustainability in legal education. However, as the current legal framework gives rather a lot of autonomy to higher education institutions, each higher education institution can decide on the extent to which include issues related to sustainability in law programs. The absolute minimum is the mandatory course on environmental protection. However, it is questionable if it is sufficient to have only one such course. It is necessary to provide more explicit references to sustainability in the laws that regulate higher education in general and the legal profession in particular. Also, at the national level, the requirement for a certain number of ECTS (or contact hours) that have to be devoted to sustainability could be determined.

To tackle the uncertainties regarding the concept of sustainability on the regulatory level in Latvia, higher education institutions are recommended to develop methodological materials for teachers to explain the concept of sustainability as well as to provide the teachers with specific practical suggestions on how to improve the curriculum towards sustainability (e.g., to include a moot court with a sustainability related topic as study assignment, organize study visits, invite external speakers from the industry or community to discuss various sustainability issues). These methodological materials would support pedagogical frameworks, such as problem-based learning, service-learning, reflective practice and ethical deliberation.

At the same time, it is advised that higher education institutions organize regular workshops for law lecturers to discuss various ways of integrating sustainability into the curriculum. Since the interdisciplinarity approach is highly appreciated in terms of sustainability education, lecturers from different disciplines (business, environment, politics, etc.) should be invited to these workshops, so the students may realize the complexity of various issues. As a pilot, the representatives of various disciplines could be present during the seminar(s) discussion.

In addition, the program directors are encouraged to facilitate the inter-disciplinary approach in law programs. As argued by various scholars above, it is necessary to include the various disciplines in law programs by incorporating courses from business, policy, environment, etc. However, it should be noted that all courses should be incorporated into the joint system, making sure that the courses from the non-legal field are not isolated.

Similarly, the program directors should contemplate how to integrate the principle of sustainability into research activities such as course papers, and theses that are a

part of the curriculum. Research activities may aim at analyzing various sustainability issues from various perspectives (of course, the legal perspective should dominate).

Also, students' activities towards serving the community may be incorporated into law programs. Namely, clinical programs and internships may be incorporated as mandatory or elective elements of the curricula. In this case, internal regulations should be developed to make sure that these initiatives serve the aims of sustainability.

References

Annan-Diab, F., & Molinari, C. (2017). Interdisciplinarity: Practical approach to advancing education for sustainability and for the Sustainable Development Goals. *The International Journal of Management Education*, *15*(2), 73–83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2017.03.006

Barth, M., & Rieckmann, M. (2012). Academic staff development as a catalyst for curriculum change towards education for sustainable development: An output perspective. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *26*, 28–36. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2011.12.011

Bosselmann, K. (2016). *The principle of sustainability: Transforming law and governance*. Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315553955

Briška, I., & Siliņa-Jasjukeviča, G. (2020). Cultural aspects of sustainable development in teacher education. *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education. Proceedings of Scientific Papers,* 78–88. https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2020

Brundiers, K., Wiek, A., & Redman, C. L. (2010). Real-world learning opportunities in sustainability: From classroom into the real world. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, *11*(4), 308–324. https://doi.org/10.1108/14676371011077540

Butin, D. (2010). *Service-learning in theory and practice: The future of community engagement in higher education*. Springer.

Calder, W., & Dautremont-Smith, J. (2009). Higher education: More and more laboratories for inventing a sustainable future. *Agenda for a sustainable America*, 93–107.

Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). Sustainability. In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved November 21, 2023, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sustainability

Dernbach, J. C. (2011). Legal education for sustainability: A report on US progress. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, *5*(2), 225–232. https://doi.org/10.1177/097340821100500212

Dernbach, J. C. (2011a). The essential and growing role of legal education in achieving sustainability. *Journal of Legal Education*, *60*(3), 489–518.

Du, X., Su, L., & Liu, J. (2013). Developing sustainability curricula using the PBL method in a Chinese context. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *61*, 80–88.

Findler, F., Schonherr, N., Lozano, R., Reider, D., & Martinuzzi, A. (2019). The impacts of higher education institutions on sustainable development: A review and conceptualization. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, *20*(1), 23–38. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-07-2017-0114

Gadotti, M. (2009). Education for sustainability. A contribution to the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Editora e Livraria Instituto Paulo Freire. https://doi.org/10.5585/eccos.n54.16138

Gavinolla, M., Livina, A., & Swain, S. (2022). State of the research on teacher education and sustainability: A bibliometrics analysis. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, *24*(2), 147–165. https://doi.org/10.2478/jtes-2022-0022

Giddings, J. (2014). Contemplating the future of clinical legal education. *Griffith Law Review*, *17*(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/10383441.2008.10854600

Goller, A., & Rieckmann, M. (2022). What do we know about teacher educators' perceptions of education for sustainable development? A systematic literature review. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, *24*(1), 19–34. https://doi.org/10.2478/jtes-2022-0003

Graham, N. (2014). This is not a thing: Land, sustainability and legal education. *Journal of Environmental Law*, *26*(3), 395–422. https://doi.org/10.1093/jel/equ020

Kahanoviča, I. (2021). Akadēmiskās vides un likumdevēja dialogs – izaicinājums tiesiskajai kultūrtelpai [Dialogue between the academic environment and the legislator – a challenge for the legal cultural space]. *Jurista Vārds*, *8*(1170), 21–27.

Koskela, T., & Karkkainen, S. (2021). Student teachers' change agency in education for sustainable development. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, *23*(1), 84–98. https://doi.org/10.2478/jtes-2021-0007

Latvijas Vēstnesis. (1995). *Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia,* 179. https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/37967-law-on-higher-education-institutions

Latvijas Vēstnesis. (2006). *Environmental Protection Law of the Republic of Latvia,* 183. https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/147917-environmental-protection-law

Latvijas Vēstnesis (2014). *Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 240 On the State Academic Education Standard. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/266187-noteikumi-par-valsts-akademiskas-izglitibas-standartu*

Latvijas Vēstnesis. (2017). *Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 322 On the Classification of Education in Latvia.* https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitibas-klasifikaciju

Latvijas Vēstnesis. (2017a). *Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 716 Minimum Requirements for the Content of the Mandatory Course in Civil Protection and the Content of Training Employees in Civil Protection*. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/295896-minimalas-prasibas-obligata-civilas-aizsardzibas-kursa-saturam-un-nodarbinato-civilas-aizsardzibas-apmacibas-saturam

Latvijas Vēstnesis. (2019). *Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 46 Procedures for the Uniform State Professional Qualification Exam of a Lawyer.* https://likumi.lv/ta/id/304369-valsts-vienota-jurista-profesionalas-kvalifikacijas-eksamena-kartiba

Leone, C. (2022). A private law theory for sustainable legal education? *German Law Journal, 23*(6). https://doi.org/10.1017/glj.2022.54

Litvins, G., & Gailīte, D. (2015). Vai ilgstspēja varētu kļūt par jaunu tiesību principu? [Could sustainability become a new principle of law?] *Jurista Vārds*, *30*(882), 6–11.

Matule, S. (2020). Eksāmens, ko jau sen bijām pelnījuši [An examination we deserved a long time ago]. *Jurista Vārds*, *19*(1233), 2.

Medina, L. (2023). Valsts vienotais jurista profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmens ir un būs. Bet kāds? [There is and will be a national unified professional qualification exam for a lawyer. But which one?] *Jurista Vārds*, *49*(1315).

Medina, L., & Salinieka, I. (2020). Juridiskās izglītības kvalitāte. Kurp ejam? [Quality of legal education. Where are we going?] *Jurista Vārds*, *01*(1111).

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Sustainability. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved December 4, 2023, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sustainability

Nhamo, G., & Mjimba, V. (2020). *Sustainable development goals and institutions of higher education*. Springer.

Nwedu, C. N. (2019). Towards clinical sustainability from evolution to revolution: A study of sustainable factors for law clinics. *Asian Journal of Legal Education*, *6*(1–2), 43–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/2322005819840109

Owen, R. (2020). Sustainability and the university law clinic. *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education*, *27*(3), 77–145. https://doi.org/10.19164/ijcle.v27i 3.1040

Oxford Learner's Dictionaries. (n.d.). Sustainability. In *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*. Retrieved December 4, 2023, from https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/sustainability?q=sustainability

Perkins, N. D. (2015). The dialects and dimensions of sustainability. *Journal of Environmental and Sustainability Law*, *21*(2), 331–378.

Poza-Vilches, F., Arjona-Romero, J., & Martín-Jaime, J. (2023). Diagnosis of blue and sustainable entrepreneurship in university education in Spain: A case study. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, *25*(1), 98–115. https://doi.org/10.2478/jtes-2023-0007

Ratniks, A. (2022). Valsts ilgstspējīgas attīstības koncepts [Concept of sustainable development of the country]. *Jurista Vārds*, 28(1242), 27–30.

Rieckmann, M. (2012). Future-oriented higher education: Which key competencies should be fostered through university teaching and learning? *Futures*, *44*(2), 127-135. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2011.09.005

Rodiņa, A. (2020). Ilgtspējība un augstākā izglītība [Sustainability and higher education]. https://www.apgads.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/lu_portal/apgads/PDF/Juridiskas-konferences/JUZK-78-2020/juzk.78-Book.pdf

Rodiņa, A. (2020a). Par dažiem jautājumiem augstākajā izglītībā [On some issues in higher education]. *Jurista Vārds*, *22*(1132), 12–18.

Rodiņa, A. (2021). Valsts vienotais jurista profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmens tuvojas… [The national unified legal professional qualification exam is approaching…] *Jurista Vārds*, *15*(1177).

Ross, A. (2009). Modern interpretations of sustainable development. *Journal of Law and Society*, *36*(1), 32–54. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6478.2009.00455.x

Salkin, P. (2015). The role of the dean in ensuring sustainable law school: Everything comes down to what is learned in land use planning and sustainable development law. *University of Toledo Law Review*, *46*(2), 375–386.

Santana, H., Araújo, E., Moresi, E., Caliman, G., & Costa-Lobo, C. (2019). The use of Moot Court Methodology as an instrument of team-based learning in the law course. *In EDULEARN19 Proceedings*, 9008-9015. IATED.

Sunthonkanokpong, W., & Murphy, E. (2019). Quality, equity, inclusion and lifelong learning in pre-service teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, *21*(2), 91–104. https://doi.org/10.2478/jtes-2019-0019

United Nations. (2015). Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Resolution. https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

Varnava, T., Lowther, J. & Payne, S. (2010). Sustainability – Is it legal? The benefits and challenges of introducing sustainability into the law curriculum. In P. Jones, D. Selby, & S. Sterling (Eds.), *Sustainability education: Perspectives and practice across higher education.* Taylor & Francis Group. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781849776516

VISC. (2020). *Lawyer's Profession Standard.* https://www.visc.gov.lv/lv/profesiju-standarti-un-profesionalas-kvalifikacijas-prasibas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

Weiss, M., & Barth, M. (2019). Global research landscape of sustainability curriculum implementation in higher education. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, *20*(4), 570–589. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-10-2018-0190

Weybrecht, G. (2013). The sustainable MBA: A business guide to sustainability. John Wiley & Sons.

World Commission on Environment and Sustainable Development. (1987). *Our Common Future (The Brundtland Report).* Oxford University Press.

Yoo, S., & Jeon, M. (2022). New wine needs to be put into new bottles: Legitimating education for sustainability in South Korea's higher education institutions. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, *24*(2), 129–146. https://doi.org/10.2478/jtes-2022-0021

Zandvliet, D., & Paul, A. (2023). Social ecology and environmental diversity in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, *25*(1), 168–181. https://doi.org/10.2478/jtes-2023-0011

Ziemele, I. (2023). Valsts vienotā jurista profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmena nozīme un izaicinājumi [The importance and challenges of the national unified legal professional qualification examination]. *Jurista Vārds*, *49*(1315).

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Dr. Inga Jekabsone, Riga Technical University, Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management, Kalnciema iela 6, Riga, LV-1048, Latvia. Email: inga.jekabsone@rtu.lv