Assessing Sustainability and Social Responsibility in Higher Education Assessment Frameworks Explained

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Abstract In this article two different assessment tools for sustainability in higher education are being described. The first, AISHE 2012, is a framework that assesses sustainable development in higher education learning programs. Developed in 2001 and continuously developed since this assessment tool is being used by learning programs in the Netherlands and Flanders to assess their educational organization, including the curriculum, research program, management, and organization. In a practical manner, the author shares experiences from the application of this AISHE 2012 framework. Second, an overview of the developing process of the ARISE framework is given. ARISE is an assessment framework at the institutional level, based on the ISO26000 guideline, that assesses social responsibility in higher education.

Keywords Assessment tools · Sustainable development · Social responsibility · Higher education · Evaluation system · ISO 26000 · AISHE 2012 · ARISE

Introduction

In society, awareness and action for sustainable development (SD) is growing. Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) play a significant role in society's drive toward sustainability through both education and research. The knowledge gained at university should enable graduates to become responsible leaders who consider social, economic, and environmental factors in making decisions (Locke et al. 2009, p. 27). The involvement of higher education institution in the transition toward a sustainable society is reflected in different declarations, signed by

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university leaders. Examples are the Talloires Declaration (1990), Copernicus Charter (1994), the Handvest Duurzaamheid HBO[1] (1999), Agenda 21 (1992), The UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014), and Rio + 20 Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (2012). Apart from these declarations and charters, several universities and universities of applied science in the Netherlands have started to take action and integrate sustainability in the organization: in its education, research, service to society, and operations. One aspect of incorporating sustainability in the management and continuous improvement of the organization is to assess the performance.

Sustainable Development and Social Responsibility in Higher Education

The most quoted definition of SD is the one as formulated in the Brundtland report 'Our Common Future':

> *"Sustainable development: development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."* (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987).

There is a huge amount of literature on SD available and the concept is much debated. Critical authors, like Anthony Giddens, or Riley Dunlap, for example criticize the ideal of 'development,' interpreted as growth and high consumption life-style in Western societies and that 'developing' countries have to catch up. Also the term 'sustainability' is much contested, as it is not specified what it is that has to be sustained.

Just as 'SD' is widely disputed, also the idea of 'education for SD' (ESD) is a much debated concept of which the merits are being questioned. In his article *'Why I don't want my children to be educated for SD'* Bob Jickling (1992) questions the relationship between education and SD, especially where it is described as 'education *for* SD' (1992, p. 5). Educating *for* suggests that education should aim to advance a particular end, in this case SD, and that it's the job of education to make people behave in a particular way. A suggestion that is highly questionable according to the author, mainly because there is no overall goal for SD. For that reason: *"[…] it seems[…] improbable that we can accept any educational prescription in the absence of an adequate conceptualization of SD."* (1992, p. 7)

According to Jickling, education is about the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, and the ability to think for oneself. (1992, p. 6) Education for SD (or education for anything else in that matter) is inconsistent with that criterion. Jickling concludes his article with stating that although *"[…] we should not educate for SD, it is quite a different matter to teach students about this concept."*

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[1] Charter for Sustainability in Universities of Applied Science in the Netherlands.

(1992, p. 8) This means that students learn about the arguments that support it, but also learn that SD is being criticized. *"[…] we must enable students to debate, evaluate, and judge for themselves the relative merits of contesting positions."* (1992, p. 8)

Against this risk of SD becoming *"indoctrination, a mindless and autocratic repetition of official definitions and limiting standards"* (in Kopnina 2011, p. 3) there is a call for *"pluralistic, emancipatory or transactional forms of education that encourage co-creation of knowledge […] and encourage multiple perspectives and critical dialogue on the very concept of SD and ESD"* (in: Kopnina 2011, p. 3) Kopnina (2011) however, questions this call for multiple perspectives stating that *"encouraging plural interpretations of ESD may in fact lead ecologically ill-informed teachers and students acculturated by the dominant neo-liberal ideology to underprivilege ecocentric perspective."* (2011, p. 1) Kopnina's concern is mainly on the dominance of an anthropocentric perspective in ESD as opposed to an ecocentric perspective. (2011, p. 6) The author stresses the importance of environmental ethics for ESD as well as highlighting paradoxes of SD and the difference between anthropocentric and ecocentric perspectives.

The scope of this article doesn't allow us to elaborate extensively on these debates and the complexity of the field. The content and approach as outlined in this article, is in that sense very practical aiming to share our experience from the Netherlands and Flanders. Instead of 'education for SD' we rather talk about 'SD in higher education' or 'sustainable education', focusing on an integral and holistic approach of integrating SD in the learning- and research programs as well as in the management and operations of an educational organization. We do stress the importance of a multi-perspective approach of ecological, economical, and social dimensions, added with the perspectives of 'time', in terms of a long-term perspective, and 'place', in terms of inclusiveness, and always stressing the importance of critical thinking.

Assessing Sustainability and Social Responsibility in Higher Education

Worldwide several evaluation- and assessment tools for SD in (higher) education exist. They range from a holistic approach, like the STARS[2] method, assessing sustainability in the curricula and the management and operations, to mere focus on awareness raising, support and inspiration, like MEERA.[3] For an overview of

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[2] STARS; The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System. (a self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance, mainly used in the United States) (https://stars.aashe.org/).

[3] MEERA: My Environmental Education Evaluation Resource Assistant. http://meera.snre.umich.edu/

existing assessment tools for sustainability in higher education we refer to an article by Shriberg.[4] In the underlying article two assessment tools will be discussed, the AISHE[5] 2012 framework and the ARISE[6] framework. This article is written on the basis of the experience in the Netherlands and Flanders with assessing study programs with the AISHE 2012 framework and the developing process of the ARISE framework, assessing the social responsibility of higher education institutions using ISO 26000 as reference point.

AISHE 2012

Auditing Instrument for Sustainability in Higher Education (AISHE) is an assessment tool for sustainability in higher education. It was originally developed by the Dutch Committee on Sustainable Higher education (CDHO) and Niko Roorda in 2001. The AISHE framework assesses a study program[7] on the development stage regarding SD. The past decade different study programs of higher education institutions have been assessed with the AISHE framework, approximately 120 study programs in total, and a substantial part of them were granted a certificate.

In 2012 this AISHE framework was reviewed by Hobéon[8] and resulted in a framework called 'AISHE 2012.' The review had mainly two objectives. The first was to make it less prescriptive, not prescribing *how* the organization should integrate sustainability in the study program. Second, the objective was to adapt the framework to the current educational context and in that way make it more up-to-date and accessible. Some issues disappeared completely from the framework, other issues were added and often the descriptions of the issues changed and/or the required level shifted. For example, integrated problem-solving and competence-based learning were less common 13 years ago than they are now. For these didactical requirements for education for SD the required level was raised. The purpose and function of the framework has remained the same: assessing sustainability in higher educational study programs.

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[4] Shriberg M.'Institutional Assessment Tools for Sustainability in Higher Education. Strenghts, Weaknesses, and Implications for Practice and Theory. University of Michigan, USA.

[5] AISHE: Auditing Instrument for Sustainability in Higher education.

[6] ARISE: Assessing Responsibility in Sustainable Education.

[7] Study program refers to the study program as organizational unit, including managerial, primary processes and secondary processes.

[8] Hobéon is a consultancy and certification organization for higher education institutions.

ARISE

AISHE 2012 is assessing sustainability at the level of the study program. Institutions of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders felt the need for an assessment tool at the level of an institution. By raising the aggregation level, more and different aspects of sustainability can be assessed, like the institutional governance and environmental management of the campus.

Because of this request from institutions, Hobéon developed a new framework for assessing social responsibility in higher education institutions, named ARISE: Assessing Responsibility In Sustainable Education. A higher education institution in this case can be the institution as a whole, a faculty or a service department, depending on the context and size of the specific institution and the objective of the assessment. The framework was developed together with stakeholders from the field and an expert committee on social responsibility.

The ARISE framework is based on ISO 26000 (2010), the international guideline for social responsibility of organizations. With ISO 26000 the focus of corporate social responsibility (CSR) changed and broadened by moving from the terminology '*corporate* social responsibility,' suggesting it only applies to corporations and business organization, to 'social responsibility of organizations.' With this shift the approach is applicable to all organizations, big or small, profit or non-profit and in that sense also includes institutions of (higher) education. Instead of just providing goods and services to society, organizations in general are now seen as contributing to the welfare of society.

Following the approach in ISO26000 we see social responsibility as the contribution of organizations to SD. Assessing organizations on their social responsibility is a manner to make an organizations performance visible and encourage organizations to increase their effort. "*An organization's performance in relation to the society in which it operates and to its impact on the environment has become a critical part of measuring its overall performance and its ability to continue operating effectively.*" (ISO 2010) This citation also shows the link with quality management in higher education, linking the social responsibility of organizations with their overall performance.

In this paper, both the AISHE 2012 (Chap. 2) and ARISE (Chap. 3) frameworks are being described. The objective is to share our experience in developing the frameworks and applying it in higher education institutions.

AISHE 2012

The Framework

The AISHE 2012 framework contains a set of issues to assess. These issues are divided in 4 categories: 1. Objectives; 2. People and Resources; 3. Education; 4. Results. These categories are based on a quality assurance approach referring to

Table 1 AISHE 2012 Issues

	Issues AISHE 2012	General description
1.	*Objectives*	
1.1	Vision	The vision on sustainable development in relation to the specific discipline of the study program
1.2	Policy	The policy that reflects the vision on concrete actions, planning, and responsible persons
1.3	Intended learning outcomes	The intended learning outcomes of students, reflecting the study programs vision on sustainable development
2	*People and resources*	
2.1	Staff	Competencies of staff to carry out the objectives on sustainable development
2.2	Network	Network of the study program in the field of sustainable development
2.3	Operations	Environmental management of the study program and contribution of the study program to the environmental management of the institution
2.4	Communication	Internal and external communication on sustainable development issues
3.	*Education*	
3.1	Content study program	Integration of sustainable development in the body of knowledge
3.2	Learning on the job	Integration of sustainable development in practical assignments
3.3	Didactics	Integration of sustainable development in didactical model
3.4	Research	Research topics and approach to sustainable development
4	*Results*	
4.1	Alumni	Contribution to sustainable development of alumni
4.2	Innovation	Innovation contributing to sustainable development

the following questions: what the study program wants to achieve? (Objectives) How does the study program aim to achieve its objectives? (People & Resources and Education) Is the study program achieving its objectives? (Results). In Table 1 an overview of the AISHE 2012 issues are being outlined.

The issues in table I are assessed on five development stages of sustainability, based on the original version of AISHE.[9] The development stages refer to the orientation of sustainability initiatives of the study program. The stages range from 'activity orientated' (stage one) to 'process orientated' (stage two), to 'system orientated' (stage three), to 'chain orientated' (stage four), to 'society orientated' (stage five). A general description of the meaning of these five stages is being presented in Table 2 below. Table 3 shows an example of issue 1.1 'Vision' with a description of the five development stages.

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[9] AISHE (2001) was based on a model for quality management developed by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and enhanced by the Dutch Institute for Quality Management (INK).

Table 2 General descriptions of the five development stages from AISHE 2012

Stage 1: Activity-oriented	Stage 2: Process-oriented	Stage 3: System-oriented	Stage 4: Chain-oriented	Stage 5: Society-oriented
General features of the stages				
• Objectives and results relate to parts of the organization	• Objectives and results relate to the whole of the organization	• Objectives are formulated clearly and results are measured. The PDCA cycle is complete	• Objectives and results relate to the role of study program in the chain	• Objectives and results relate to the role of study program in society
• The processes are based on actions of individual staff members	• Relevant parts of the study program are involved	• Stakeholder management is integral part of the cycle	• External stakeholders are actively involved in the processes in the study program	• A broad range of relevant social partners are actively involved in the study program
• Decisions are made on an ad hoc basis	• Decisions have a short-term horizon	• Decisions are made on the basis of a medium-term educational policy	• Decisions are taken in consultation with the partners	• The study program takes a leading role in society
				• The study program has a long-term strategy

Using this framework the study program is being assessed on these development stages for all 13 issues, resulting in an integral judgment of what development stage the study program is situated in.

The Audit Method

Generally, an AISHE audit consists of two parts: a self-evaluation of the study program and an analysis of relevant documents. The self-evaluation is formed during a consensus meeting led by two AISHE auditors. This consensus meeting takes one full day and is conducted with a representative group of people from the study program, including management, staff, students, support staff, and the professional field. This group evaluates the performance of the study program and determines a relevant development stage for each issue. This decision process is based on consensus, meaning that people should convince each other with arguments and examples. Meanwhile the auditors are asking questions and facilitate

Table 3 Stage description of issue 1.1 'Vision' (AISHE 2012)

Objectives

Vision

Stage 1: Activity-oriented	Stage 2: Process-oriented	Stage 3: System-oriented	Stage 4: Chain-oriented	Stage 5: Society-oriented
• The study program has an implicit vision on sustainable development and education.	• The learning study program has explicitly formulated a vision on sustainable development and education	• The vision on sustainable development and education is shown in the profile of the learning study program	• The vision on sustainable development is related to the role of the study program in the chain	• The vision on sustainable development and education is based on long-term developments in society and the position of the study program within society
• The vision can be seen in the activities carried out by different parts of the study program	• The vision is supported by a large extent of the study program	• Education and supporting processes are lead by the vision	• The professional field and other educational institutions are active partners in developing the vision on sustainable development	• A broad range of societal actors are participating in developing the vision of the study program

the process of consensus. All participants are equal. The opinion of management has the same weight as the one of a student. This is to emphasize that sustainability in education is something that needs to be seen, felt, and supported in all parts of an organization. The discussion that takes place offers the auditors relevant information and insight in the actual incorporation of sustainability into the study program.

Figure 1 shows an example of a self-evaluation outcome developed during a consensus meeting, demonstrating the current status with the arrows showing the ambition level of the study program.

By scoring not only the current situation, but also formulating an ambition and respective timeline, the assessment also provides input for further integration of sustainability into the study program.

After this consensus meeting, the audit team will scrutinize several documents to check if the consensus meeting outcome can be verified by the documents. It is our experience that a consensus meeting gives a very realistic view on the integration of sustainability into the study program as participants not only have to convince the auditors but also each other. As a result of the way the meeting is facilitated by the auditors, an open atmosphere of discussion and dialog is stimulated.

Fig. 1 Graphical overview of an outcome of a consensus meeting

Certification

Certification is based on a 'star system,' ranging from one to five stars, corresponding with the respective five development stages. Figure 2 shows an example of a three-star-certificate. Based on the documents and discussions the audit team gives an integral judgment of the development stage of the study program as a whole. This could also imply that the study program is offered a redress period for a certain period of time.

At the level of a three-star-certificate, meaning the program is system-oriented with regard to SD, the study program can apply for an accreditation in 'distinctive features'[10] by the NVAO.[11] Study programs use this distinctive feature as a way to externally profile the organization as sustainable.

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[10] Bijzonder Kenmerk Duurzaam Hoger Onderwijs (Distinctive feature Sustainable Higher Education).

[11] Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie (*Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization*).

Fig. 2 A certificate with three stars, meaning the study program is 'system orientated' with respect to the integration of sustainable development

Baseline Assessment

AISHE 2012 is multifunctional in use. Besides using the assessment framework for certification, it is often used to do a baseline assessment. Because of the consensus method, this tool is very suitable for raising awareness, create enthusiasm among staff and students, concretize the terms 'SD' and 'social responsibility', and provide these terms with a study program specific elaboration, concrete results of current situation, ambition, and activities that are needed to achieve this ambition. "*AISHE is an excellent example of a process-oriented approach to sustainability assessment. The consensus building approach […] creates a flexible platform upon which to stimulate and operationalize sustainability in higher education*" (Shriberg 2004, p. 79).

ARISE: Assessing Responsibility In Sustainable Education

Introduction

AISHE (2001) has been analyzed into strengths and weaknesses (Lambrechts and Ceulemans 2013; Shriberg 2004). Some of the shortcomings that were mentioned are the fact that research, service to society, and operations are underexposed in the framework and it can only be used in small groups on the level of single study programs. (2011, p. 6)

ARISE, *Assessing Responsibility In Sustainable Education*, is a newly developed framework to assess sustainability and social responsibility at a higher

aggregation level of educational institutions. This framework was developed on the request of educational institutions and addresses the management of an educational institution regarding its social responsibility and its incorporation and results in the organization, using a quality assurance approach.

The ARISE Framework

The framework consists of eleven subjects that are based on the core issues and principles of ISO 26000, the international guideline for social responsibility of organizations (2010). Before elaborating on the content and approach, the ARISE framework will be presented in Table 4.

Development of ARISE

For the developing process of the ARISE framework we made use of the core issues and principles of ISO 26000. The ISO 26000 guideline helps to clarify what social responsibility is and helps businesses and organizations to translate relevant issues and principles into effective actions. ISO 26000 was developed for all types of organizations regardless of their activity, size, or location by many different stakeholders across the world. Representatives from government, NGOs, industry, consumer groups, labor organizations, and educational institutions around the world were involved in its development, which provided an international consensus. For this reason, we chose to use ISO 26000 as the reference point for the content of the ARISE framework.

For assessing these issues we use a general approach of quality assurance and consider social responsibility of organizations as an aspect of quality assurance. The ARISE framework consists of different issues, divided into quality assurance approach, as used by the Dutch institutional accreditation of quality management[12]: objectives, processes, results, and context. Using this approach means that by looking at the social responsibility of educational organizations we use a quality assurance framework as a reference point. In that sense the framework is based on assessing the PDCA cycle of social responsibility policy of educational institutions. Table 5 shows how the ARISE issues are related to the general aspects of quality assurance.

The core issues of ISO 26000 are: organizational governance, human rights, labor practices, the environment, fair operating systems, consumer issues and community involvement and development. (NEN-ISO 26000 2010, p. 21) These

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[12] NVAO Beoordelingskaders accreditatiestelsel Hoger Onderwijs *Instellingstoets Kwaliteitszorg* (2011).

Table 4 ARISE Framework (2012)

Subject	Issue
What it is about	*The state we want to see*
Vision and mission	• The management of the organization has formulated a clear mission and vision on social responsibility. These are publicly supported in a broad and provable way • The profile of the organization has been designed in collaboration with different stakeholders • The organization has a clear vision on its intended added value for the users of its services in education, research, and service to society.
Policy	• The organization has translated the mission and vision into concrete policy • The management of the organization is explicitly responsible for the policy on social responsibility • The responsibility for implementing the policy is clearly and provably delegated in the organization
Education	• In developing its educational portfolio the management takes into account its objectives of social responsibility • The organization stimulates the study programs to integrate relevant aspects of social responsibility into the content of the study programs. • The organization has an explicit SR policy for its internationalization activities
Research	• In developing research portfolio the management takes into account its objectives of social responsibility • The organization stimulates the research entities to integrate social responsibility issues into their research study programs and activities
Service to society	• In developing its services the organization takes on a perspective of social responsibility • The organization has an active dialog with its clients/partners on social responsibility
Operations/ Planet	• The organization has a clear view on its sphere of influence on the planet side of its operations • The organization has a policy and concrete targets comprising a neutral or positive impact on its physical environment • The approach leads to tangible results
Operations/ People	• The organization has a clear view on its sphere of influence on the people side of its operations • The organization has policy and concrete targets regarding the social quality of the organization • The approach leads to tangible results
Operations/ Prosperity	• The organization has a clear image of its sphere of influence on the financial side of its operations • The organization has policy and concrete targets comprising a responsible financial continuity • The approach leads to tangible results
Students	• The organization communicates clearly to (potential) students the level, status, content, and names of study programs • The organization deals with its students in a provable responsible manner • The organization explicitly pays attention to students with a particular background, like international students or students from minority groups

Table 4 (continued)

Subject	Issue
Professional field	• The organization communicates to future and current employers regarding level, status, content, and names of study programs
	• The organization has relations with educational institutions, organizations, and businesses in the region, focused on strengthening the societal meaning of education, research, and service to the community
Culture	• The social responsibility of the organization is supported and shared by the majority of employees in the organization
	• The organization communicates its targets and results with respect to the social responsibility of the organization systematically, within and outside the organization

Table 5 Issues ARISE framework

Quality assurance	Issues ARISE framework
Objectives	• Vision/mission
	• Policy
Processes	• Education
	• Research
	• Service to society
	• Operations regarding people planet and prosperity
Results	• Students
	• Professional field
Context	• Culture

core issues were translated into the educational practices. This was done in such a way that the terminology and focus would be recognizable for Dutch higher education institutions. Table 6 illustrates the relation between the core issues of ISO 26000 and the issues of ARISE.

The primary processes of education and research are not directly or explicitly linked with a core issue of ISO 26000, but of course these are relevant issues in the ARISE framework and therefore present in the framework.

ISO 26000 not only contains core issues, but also *principles*, being: accountability, transparency, ethical behavior, respect for stakeholder interests, respect for the rule of law, respect for international norms of behavior, and respect for human rights. (NEN-ISO 26000 2010, pp. 11–15) We view these principles as important and relevant for all issues in the ARISE framework and so they will be taken into account during the audit process. Two fundamental practices of social responsibility, according to ISO 26000, are that organizations recognize their social responsibility within their sphere of influence, and identify and engage with their stakeholders. These practices, as well as the principles, are always taken into consideration.

The assessment tool has been developed in collaboration with different stakeholders, being a group of relevant people from the field and an expert committee on social responsibility, consisting of people from different (higher) education institutions in the Netherlands and Flanders and the professional field.

Table 6 Reference table ISO 26000 core issues—ARISE issues

Core issue ISO 26000	Issue ARISE	Explanation
Organizational governance	Vision and mission Policy	Organizational governance is translated in a vision, mission, and policy and is a key issue in the ARISE framework. The focus is on the managerial leadership and the incorporation of the vision and policy in the organization
Human rights	Operations/ people	Focus is on policy regarding operations that influence the 'people aspect,' including human rights. This concerns a diverse range of issues, e.g., sustainable procurement, diversity, or internationalization policy
	Students	Focuses amongst other things on policy regarding students with particular background
Labor practices	Operations/ people	This issues deals a.o. with the organizations' HRM policy, also internationally
	Operations/ prosperity	In this issue the focus is on responsible financial management, which directly influences the labor practices
The environment	Operations/ environment	This issue addresses the impact on the environment and the organizational policy
Fair operating systems	Culture	Culture is the basis of fair operating systems and a boundary condition for social responsibility of the organization
	Students	This issue focuses a.o. on fair and transparent communication with students
	Professional field	This issue focuses a.o. on fair and transparent association and communication toward the professional field
Consumer issues	Students	Students are considered the consumers of education and in that respect their interests are priority
	Professional field	In a broader sense the professional field is also consumer and its interests are being taken care of as well
Community involvement and development	Service to society	This issue focuses a.o. on an active dialog and involvement with the community

Audit Method

The assessment tool has an organizational scope. This can be the institution, but also a faculty or service department. It depends on the size, context, and current state of the organization. In 2013, a pilot will start that will assess two organizational units from a higher education institution: the service department (responsible for all service-related activities of the school, like energy, catering, building, procurement, et cetera) and the faculty of engineering.

The assessment procedure starts with a scrutiny of relevant documents by the secretary of the audit panel. Depending of the focus of the audit, an audit panel

will be formed, in coordination with the institute. After the analysis, a site visit takes place, varying between 1 and 3 days depending on the scope of the audit. During this site visiting the audit panel will interview relevant representatives of the organization to analyze how the quality assurance mechanisms are working with respect to the issues in the ARISE framework.

For each issue the audit panel determines whether the organization is 'committed' to sustainability and social responsibility, 'recognized' for its social responsibility or 'excellent' in this respect. This judgment is based on the findings of the initial scrutiny of documents to the knowledge and experience of the panel, and on the conversations with the organizational representatives and external stakeholders. This terminology of 'committed', 'recognized' and 'excellent' is based on the EFQM Excellence Model, a quality tool for improving organizations performance (www.efqm.org). This terminology emphasizes the focus on growth regarding SD and social responsibility and stimulates and encourages institutes to commit themselves and start the journey of transforming educational and organizational practice.

Committed

An educational organization is 'committed' when it has a clear vision on its social responsibility with tangible outputs, communicates this ambition in the organization and plays an active role in adjusting policies and processes to this perspective of SR. It's not yet required to show results on all relevant topics but it is required to have started on essential areas. This certificate is valid for two years.

Recognized

An organization will be judged 'recognized' when it has concretized its vision on social responsibility for all relevant areas. The organization achieves tangible results and communicates in a bidirectional way with its environment. This certificate is valid for 3 years.

Excellent

An organization is 'excellent' when it has preserved its certificate 'recognized' for several years and is perceived as opinion leader in the field of social responsibility and SD by its environment. This certificate is valid for 3 years.

Future Perspectives

According to Shriberg (2002) sustainability initiatives are most successful when driven by diver by different stakeholders, with the support of top leaders, acting in a coordinated manner. This needs to happen on the individual and organizational level. Change agents (individual level) are most effective "by appealing to personal ethics at low levels in the organizational hierarchy while appealing to institutional strategic positioning (e.g. reputational end recruitment benefits) at higher levels."(2002, p. 3) We believe that the ARISE framework will support this institutional strategic positioning of sustainability and facilitate the road toward a coordinated and systematic approach. In the Netherlands higher education institutions are required to 'profile' the organization on specific themes. Sustainability could be such a theme and several educational organizations have indeed opted for 'sustainability' as a profiling characteristic. One institution in the Netherlands with 'sustainability' as a focal point, has decided to assess all of its study programs with an explicit ambition to acquire a two-star-certificate for all study programs in 2015.

At this moment a shorter version of AISHE 2012 framework is being developed. This framework will be used by study programs that are part of an institution that is rewarded with an ARISE certificate 'recognized' or 'excellent'. As some issues have then already been checked, these do not need to be assessed at the individual study program anymore. However, at this moment in time, the ARISE framework is still quite ambitious for higher education institutions. It's a serious objective for institutions that offer study programs in which sustainability is integrated and apply a social responsibility approach in their general operations. On the way to achieve this objective institutions are stimulated to undertake steps, among others through certification.

In the future we will adapt AISHE 2012 and the ARISE framework to different school types[13] as it is important to involve different level and types of (professional) education to guarantee continuity of education for SD in the chain.

One of the books that inspires us in our work is 'The Three Levels of Sustainability' (Cavagnaro and Curiel 2012). In their book they state that the ultimate goal of SD is securing a better quality of life for all, both now and for future generations, by pursuing responsible economic growth, equitable social progress, and effective environmental protection. These three dimensions refer to a sustainable society. To achieve this higher level of consciousness, governments, institutions, and organizations need individuals who can steer the process toward this superordinate goal: a higher quality of life for all. This process of change toward sustainability depends on the choices made by people. It is therefore essential that not only societies and organizations choose sustainability, but also individuals. This book departs from the premise that the journey toward sustainability is by its very nature a process that has to involve all three levels mentioned

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[13] In the Netherlands that would be mainly schools for vocational training (*mbo scholen*).

above and each one with their respective dimensions. This reminds us that assessment and certification of sustainability in higher education institutions is explicitly seen as a means to an end, not an end in itself.

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