

# Eradicating World Poverty Requires More than Facebook Likes: The Academic Commitment to Educate Socially Responsible Leaders

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## ABSTRACT

*What are the principles and practices that academic management programs need to educate Millennials on social responsibility and sustainability? What can universities do to instruct managers to solve complex ethical problems such as world poverty? The article suggests theoretical and practical insights for higher education management programs based on the principles and practices of developing socially responsible leaders. Through a review of The Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME), the research invites academics and institutions to commit toward business ethics and poverty alleviation. The author suggests how the process of adopting the principles and developing appropriate educational opportunities in line with these principles provides a space for ethical education for current generations. Participating academic institutions enter into a network of scholars and programs acting as positive agents for world benefit. The current world challenges of poverty, ethics and sustainability require committed academic institutions and rooted in the principles and practices of social and global responsibility for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

*Keywords:* Academic Commitment, Education, Facebook, Prime of Responsible Management Education (PRME), World Poverty

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## INTRODUCTION

Simply clicking on ‘likes’ in the social media world cannot solve the complex problems of our times. While these techniques quickly share information and mobilize large number of individuals, social media alone cannot solve complex issues related to global poverty. Even

when information is adequate, the lack of analysis undermines the possibility of identifying long-term sustainable solutions. Richard Stern, President of World Vision, suggests that the reality of poverty is complex and requires more than compassion alone. “Poverty, whether here in America or abroad, is one of the oldest and most complex problems plaguing the

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human race. It is tangled in social, cultural, economic, political, ethnic, geographic, and spiritual factors that challenge even the most skilled experts. Simple solutions just don't work, and well-meaning amateurs can not only waste valuable resources but even cause unintended harm in their efforts" (Stearns, 2013).

Moving at the speed of *Twitter*, the Millennial generation (also referred as Generation Y for those born between 1980 and 2000) is touched by glamour images of poverty, the resulting effect of the commercialization of philanthropy. Validated by a short-attention media world, a fast-paced culture and an instant-gratification mentality, Millennials seem to only get on board with easily digestible and manageable solutions. Yet, there are no fast and easy answers to complex issues such as world poverty. It is at this crossroad between "technological compassion" and analytical reflection where academia has the primary responsibility to educate, inspire and engage young generations into competent, critical, and deeper analysis.

Various studies on Millennials, the generation now entering higher education, show that these students place significant emphasis on technology (Paul, 2001) ethics (Goldgehn, 2004). They are a generation who love to volunteer and be involved. They are "strong advocates of social responsibility and care about the world, the environment, poverty and global issues in general" (Miller, 2004, p. 2). They represent a challenge for educators and higher education institutions not only to keep up with technology but also to make the teaching and learning meaningful and ethically relevant to issues of today's society (Partridge & Hallam, 2006). Reducing education to merely instill skills for personal success would miss a great opportunity to develop socially conscious leaders capable of making the world a better place for all. Higher education, especially management education, needs to respond to these challenges and provide a learning environment based on the principles and practices of socially responsible management education. For Millennials, social responsibility is no longer optional. They expect that their employers, as

companies and organizations, make a positive impact on society (Zogbi, 2008). They expect a management education with more responsible and synergistic approaches on key ethical questions concerning social responsibility, the environment, and the powerful effects of new technologies. Consequently, this worldview requires a change in management education, a change in leadership strategies and an expansion of views and approaches (Dhiman, Marques, & Holt, 2012).

The time has come for business schools and public service management programs to center their education around global challenges of sustainability and poverty reduction. Social responsibility and ethics are no longer electives in the business of adequately preparing 21<sup>st</sup> century leaders (Gasparski, 2008). Social responsibility pertains to all stakeholders but it begins with a value-based commitment of management faculty and program administrators. Academia can therefore provide opportunities to learn appropriate competencies to develop globally responsible leaders and promote organizational practices for world benefits, actively contributing to poverty eradication, replenishing and restoring nature, and building foundations for peace (BAWB, 2006). These renewed management values are already priorities among the 363 academic institutions and programs (as of April 2011) that adopted the Principles of Responsible Management Education (abbreviated PRME and pronounced PRIME). Developed in 2007 by the academic institutions connected to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), the adoption of principles create opportunities for participating academic institutions to exchange best practices in teaching, learning and engaging for world benefit.

The idea of the PRME was introduced by the UNGC at the Global Forum "Business as an Agent of World Benefit" at Case Western Reserve University in October 2006. Inspired by the internationally accepted business values of the 10 principles of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the PRME offer a boost for making management education an

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