

# Chapter 10

## Globally Responsible Management Education: From Principled Challenges to Practical Opportunities

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### ABSTRACT

*Responsible management education is a crucial step in shaping our common future. This chapter reviews how the Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) offers a platform for institutional commitment and leadership engagement toward business ethics and poverty alleviation. Specifically, this work critically analyzes the challenges and opportunities in adopting the educational principles for practical outcomes in the context of other trends in socially responsible global engagement. Through a review of the institutional trends in relation to PRME, the authors offer practical opportunities for curricula development, academic engagement, and ethical education for the 21st Century.*

### INTRODUCTION

Management education is first and foremost about leadership development for social impact. In the ever-changing complex world, management education should challenge those candidates whose priority is simply self-enrichment. It should prepare students to be responsible leaders in the world. Even within traditional fields like finance, accounting, business administration, and

public service, management programs emphasize their social and global responsibility for a shared sustainable future. A growing number of studies have been highlighting these trends and the possibilities and responsibilities that management education has for world benefit and global prosperity (Muff et. al. 2013; Werther & Chandler, 2014; Williams, 2014). These trends are already visible in numerous managerial and leadership practices of corporations engaged in sustainable

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8195-8.ch010

development, human rights, labor rights, and the anti-corruption agenda of the United Nations Global Compact (Lawrence & Beamish, 2013; Rasche & Kell, 2010). However, many world-wide management programs still have to make several changes in their curricula offerings and strategic priorities to become more relevant to the global responsibility trends for sustaining profits, people, planet and partnerships (Fisk, 2010; Sosik & Jung, 2010; Wankel & Stachowicz-Stanusch, 2011; Wankel & Stoner, 2009).

The United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management (PRME) emerged from the United Nations' Global Compact (UNGC) in 2007 in order to offer a shared platform for academic institutions to engage in globally responsible management education. Through a set of shared common principles and a commitment to regularly shared information with its stakeholders on the progress made in implementing the principles, PRME is becoming a valuable tool in shaping the future of responsible management education. "The PRME is the first organized relationship between the United Nations and management-related academic institutions, business schools, and universities" (PRME Secretariat, 2014). The PRME's objective is to increase social responsibility and sustainability in management education; both are concepts that acknowledge managers as moral actors (Lavine & Roussin, 2012) and socially responsible agents (Katamba, 2012).

The idea that business schools have a role in educating socially responsible managers and leaders engaged in sustainable development is relatively new. For example, at the 1992 UN Rio Earth Summit there was a marked absence of business school representatives. In contrast, twenty years later, a conference entitled "PRME Global Forum" included 300 attendees from some of the most prominent business schools in the world that came together at the UN Rio+20 Earth Summit. Now, there is a rapidly growing acceptance of business school's role in sustainable development

starting from the private sector. This acceptance has helped make PRME into an important base for business educators and has given management education a role in positive, progressive social change (Kelley & Nahser, 2014).

Much of this acceptance can be attributed to the mid-2000's financial crisis which led business educators to ponder whether the curriculum was adequately addressing bad management practices, or if it was even encouraging these practices. However, most of the ethical implementations in management curricula have been simply a 'patchwork' without fully integrating ethics across the curricula (Boylan & Donahue, 2003) or placing ethics as a world benefit at the core of good management education (Melé, 2012). In addition, much of the teaching resources devoted to ethics center around individual-level values with an emphasis on short-term exercises, rather than focusing on the interconnectedness of individuals and their organizations with long-term, in-depth projects that equip students with an understanding of the complex issues regarding business and society (Lavine & Roussin, 2012).

Currently, more and more business schools and management programs have joined or are in the process of joining the movement to partner businesses with socially responsible principles. PRME, along with other similar engagement initiatives for academia and corporations, is a realization of the effort to provide a principled platform for socially responsible global engagement. In the following sections we will examine the ethical implications of adopting the principles and engaging in a shared process to foster sustainable and socially responsible educational practice. Although the institutional reasons for joining, and ultimately the level of commitment of PRME academic institutions, may vary the basic principles offer a common ground for expressing their specific commitments in line with the initiative's purpose. Similar to the voluntary participation of corporations in the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC),

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