The Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME):
The First Decade – What has been achieved?
The Next Decade – Responsible Management Education's Challenge for the
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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This special issue of the *International Journal of Management Education* looks at the evolving nature of the UN Global Compact's initiative focused on business schools—the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) as it reaches the end of its first decade and as we enter the era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Created in 2007, PRME was launched at the UN Global Compact Leaders Summit in Geneva, Switzerland, a gathering attended by more than 1,000 business, civil society, and government leaders. At that time, the underlying goal was to develop the capabilities of our students to be generators of sustainable value for a more inclusive global economy through our teaching, research, and campus practices. Then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, pointing to the potential of the PRME initiative, noted that, "The Principles for Responsible Management Education have the capacity to take the case for universal values and business into classrooms on every continent."

As educators of the next as well as current generation of business leaders, business schools are in an unique position to influence the mindsets and actions of some of the largest and most powerful organisations on the planet. The underlying commitment to enhancing responsible management education can be characterized as a journey—and we are all at different stages along this journey. Many forward thinking business schools have already recognised their opportunities and responsbililties, assuming leadership roles within PRME as part of their commitment to responsible management education. Other business schools, while teaching,

researching, and practicing responsible management, are relatively new to PRME—and still others are just getting started. As those of us who have been actively involved in this initiative can attest, the process is typically characterized by opportunities and openings as well as barriers and obstacles. Building on the passion and commitment of concerned individuals who typically initiate PRME on their campuses, the challenge is to institutionalise responsible management education's promise in shaping the mindsets of the next generation of business professionals.

The publication of this special issue marks the 10th anniversary of PRME. As Jonas Haertle, Head of the PRME Secretariat, noted, it "is perfectly timed to bring together contributions in research from across the globe on the key challenges in Responsible Management Education [that will] inform and shape future research and practice." The basic objective of this special issue is thus two-fold: (1) reflecting back on what has been achieved since PRME was launched; and (2) looking forward to PRME's next decade, which is currently being shaped by the formal adoption of the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals—often referred to as Agenda 2030. Building on the Millennium Development Goals, which expired in 2015, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (and their associated 169 target areas) include an ambitious agenda focused on resolving a broad range of challenges, from eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, to facilitating good health and wellness across the planet and working toward gender equality and quality education for all, to pressing concerns dealing with water, energy, economy, infrastructure, consumption, climate, our ecosystems, and institutions for peace and sustainable development.

At the conclusion of the 2015 Global Forum for Responsible Management Education in New York, participants from PRME signatories reaffirmed support for PRME, making commitments to enhance the quality of the PRME initiative individually, institutionally, and

collectively as a community. They also called for governments, business leaders, accrediting bodies, rankings providers, and UN system entities to support management educators in their key role in developing future leaders and helping to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In her closing statement at the Global Forum, Susana Malcorra, Chef de Cabinet, spoke on behalf of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, saying, "today, I am encouraged to see the progress you have made—individually, at your academic institutions, and as a community" and recognising that "as educators, researchers, and thought leaders, your role [in achieving the SDGs] is essential."

Working towards achieving the SDGs provides a range of challenges for Responsible Management Education moving forward, not only in curriculum design and pedagogy and our research agenda, but also in building partnerships within and across our institutions and communities locally and globally as well as further developing our own institutional practices. The papers in this special issue capture many of these challenges.

The papers include a mix of theoretical contributions, new models and frameworks, case histories, and an array of studies—qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods—focused on teaching, learning, and practice in Responsible Management Education. The special issue also attempts to capture many of the spinoffs and developments that are associated with PRME— including the Giving Voice to Values initiative, 50 + 20 Project, Sustainability Literacy Test, and the "Gap Frame" among many others. While this array of activities is not exhaustive, it is intended to capture the passion and innovative spirit that is embedded within the PRME enterprise. An additional feature of the special issue is the inclusion of invited thought pieces and critiques, drawing on the insight and experience of people who have been actively involved with

PRME in a variety of capacities, in addition to traditional, peer-reviewed journal articles that examine PRME along a number of different dimensions.

A GLOBAL COMPACT FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

Referred to as an important milestone in the history of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on a global scale (Post, 2012), the UN Global Compact is an ambitious, groundbreaking attempt to actively engage the international business community in the development, implementation, and disclosure of sustainable policies and practices within an inclusive, multi-stakeholder orientation (Buono, 2014; Kell, 2012). As it currently stands, it is the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative (www.unglobalcompact.org).

Launched in 2000 in response to then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's call to business leaders to work with the UN to "initiate a global compact of shared values and principles" (ABIS & Ashridge Business School, 2013, p. 1), the Compact is a voluntary strategic policy initiative for progressive businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten principles for responsible business in the areas of human rights, labor, the environment, and anti-corruption. An underlying goal is that by committing to the Compact, business, which is seen as a primary driver of globalization, can help ensure that its basic activities – focusing on markets, commerce, technology, and finance – will move forward in ways that benefit economies and societies around the world (see www.unglobalcompact.org).

Beginning with an initial group of 44 firms, the Compact has grown to more than 12,000 participants, including over 9,000 businesses and more than 3,000 civil society organizations in 170 countries around the world. Meant as a "living document," the Compact reflects the culmination of a "tapestry of events" (Post, 2012) as the ideal of CSR has evolved from initial

resistance to the acceptance of far broader social responsibilities, with a focus on policy-oriented responses to stakeholder engagement and broadly defined sustainable development (Buono, 2014; Rasche & Gilbert, 2012). Although there are a number of collaborative platforms for corporate sustainability presently in existence, the UNGC remains the largest and most globally comprehensive, and the only such initiative directly connected with the United Nations. As Georg Kell (2012), the initial Executive Director of the Compact, has noted, the initiative has fostered myriad UN-business partnerships in support of critical UN goals, diffusing UN values into the business operations of major corporations around the world.

Although the Global Compact has received significant attention since its inception, questions continue to linger with respect to its effectiveness and questions of legitimacy, juxtaposed with strong support by proponents. Some critics, for example, have argued that the UN's endeavors are preferential toward business, adopting a "pro-market spin" that over time will ultimately reduce its global legitimacy (Thérien & Pouliot, 2006, p. 67). Others suggest that the Compact simply provides an opportunity for firms to make "grandiose" claims about their corporate citizenship (Sethi, 2003) that fall well short of their actual practices and commitments (e.g., Barkemeyer, 2009; Knudsen, 2011; Sethi & Schepers, 2014). Proponents, in contrast, note that similar to other multi-stakeholder initiatives, the Compact can be thought of as a "network of networks" (Rasche, 2012, p. 695), a far reaching voluntary social responsibility initiative with "unprecedented growth" (Voegtlin & Pless, 2014, p. 179), intended as a "necessary supplement" to—rather than replacement of—regulation (Rasche, 2009, p. 513). Given these different perspectives, others have used the lens of co-existing logics (Sewell, 1992; Smith and Lewis, 2011) to better understand the structure of the Compact and its role as a voluntary global governance mechanism to promote responsible management (Brown, Clark, & Buono, 2017). As

the essence of a recent review of this literature (Voegtlin & Pless, 2014) underscores, despite the extensive work that has been done thus far there is considerable work that still needs to be done.

The focus of the Global Compact is essentially on the present generation of business professionals—PRME's emphasis is largely on the next generation of managers, leaders, and business professionals, committed to developing their capabilities to be generators of sustainable value for a more inclusive global economy. Signatories to PRME commit to six broad principles—from their underlying purpose, values, pedagogical methods, and research, to partnerships and dialogue with stakeholders—focused on enhancing responsible management education. Much like the commitment to continuous improvement made by companies within the Global Compact, PRME signatory schools also commit to ongoing development and enhancement of their approach to responsible management education in their research, curricula and pedagogical innovation, and community activities and campus operations. The goal is to embed a commitment to sustainable, inclusive practice in everything that business schools undertake.

Yet, although PRME has been cast as a catalyst for transformation within our business schools (Buono, Gitsham & Carteron, 2013; Buono, Gitsham, Carteron, & Haertle, 2015)), critics contend that even if the message in the classroom is becoming more oriented toward responsible management, there must be a much stronger alignment between such espoused ethical values and the actual practices of our higher educational institutions if they are to have a real impact on the next generation of business professionals (Bruhn, 2008; Lozano, 2012). This latter concern has led to the adoption of a 7th principle, that schools must realize that their own organizational practices should serve as examples of the values and attitudes that are conveyed to students.

As this brief background discussion suggests, while the UNGC and PRME are not panaceas, they have enhanced a constructive dialogue and discourse about responsible business conduct and responsible management education among a wide range of individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions across the globe. This special issue is intended to further contribute to our understanding of PRME—within the context of the Global Compact—in terms of where it has been, where it is likely headed, and the main challenges the initiative is facing in its ongoing journey toward responsible management.

THE SPECIAL ISSUE

This special issue includes 26 articles and 2 book reviews from a group of close to 60 scholars who have been deeply involved with the UNGC's academic facing organization; PRME. The articles reflect a truly international perspective, with contributors from the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, Brazil, and South Africa. The gender distribution of contributors is 65% female and 35% male. As another reflection of the truly diverse, international nature of this evolving movement, the editors of this special issue are from the UK, USA, and Egypt.

This special issue begins with an article by Jonas Haertle, the present head of the PRME Secretariat, tracing PRME's decade-long evolution from an emerging idea into a global movement, describing the context in which PRME was born, the challenges it seeks to respond to, and how this "network of networks" works to serve the goal of sustainable development. The core of the special issue is then grouped around three main foci: 1) the role of business schools in the current global context; 2) how business schools engage with responsible management education—in essence what they actually do in practice; and 3) looking forward, a call for action

in terms of what we can do individually, institutionally, and in partnership as we strive to facilitate the success of an ambitious agenda for inclusive, sustainable development across the planet.

The first group of articles address the state of the world and the role of business schools, exploring interdisciplinary education as a necessary response to the requirements of the SDGs, providing a framework for business schools to engage with the SDGs, and examining the positioning of UN PRME in what is becoming a crowded field of responsible management education. Many of the underlying challenges are further explored—including the relationship between PRME and poverty, the challenge of "voicing" one's values, and feminism and university governance—ending this section with a focus on PRME and sustainability literacy. Gender inequality in the workplace is further explored in a book review (at the end of the special issue) that sheds light on the controversy of framing gender equality on the merits of a "business case" versus a "value-based" position.

The second group of articles delves into the details of how business schools actually "do" responsible management education, focusing on students, embedding PRME across the institution, and using innovative pedagogical approaches. The articles shed light on the SDG-related learning content in student organizations, which are also explored as communities of practice. The contributions show how faculty-led international service-learning courses in developing countries can engage students in becoming responsible global citizens. The voice of students and their views on the SDGs are also highlighted.

The institutional impact of PRME is then addressed, especially examining the tension between embracing the transformative approach of PRME and traditional academic life, how sharing information on progress (SIP) reports can be improved to reflect implementation barriers

in addition to organizational successes, and mapping a school's contribution to its stakeholders in terms of social responsibility and sustainable practice. The articles also reveal the importance of integrating top-down commitment with bottom-up passion in implementing PRME, exploring the possibilities and tensions that responsible management education means for fundamental changes of a business school's own ethos of what such responsibility means in light of its own local and organizational context. Pedagogical approaches that promise to improve the instrumentality of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development to students include experiential problem solving, in-depth case studies, and a games orientation. There is also a book review on how responsible management education puts theory into practice, while highlighting the need for further critical research at the end of this special issue.

The third and final section of this special issue is a reflective call for action. The articles include specific frameworks for enhancing our understanding of the true challenges of sustainable practice and development to highly personalized reflection on the shortcomings and promise of a true commitment to responsible management education. Readers will be exposed to a unique nation-level approach to examining the SDGs in terms of a "Gap Frame" intended to facilitate the prioritization of a national sustainability agenda. In what might be thought of as a closing challenge, the issue ends with an in-depth, highly personal, and at times passionate examination—in essence, "a polemic turned reflection"— focusing on the deep introspection required for a critical, systemic analysis of the ideological choices, such as neo-liberalism, that directly affect the state of the world and human development.

Editors' Reflections

The process of putting together this special issue has been both a rich and humbling journey for the editors. Each one of us has passionately engaged with PRME over the years, whether through PRME working groups, local and regional PRME chapters, our research and publications, serving on advisory committees, and myriad other activities. We realize that this passion and engagement with PRME reflects a conscious personal choice to join a community of likeminded individuals who are striving to make the world a better place. The irony of where we come from was not lost on us. We are writing these reflections at a time when each of our countries—the UK, USA, and Egypt—are each deeply divided and undergoing significant political transformations with equally significant social and economic implications. Yet, regardless of where each one of us sits in the political divide, we have found PRME to be a way for coping with the myriad and seemingly unsurmountable—often bleak—global and regional challenges we face. When this bigger picture is often alarming, small local wins give hope and inspiration. The local area networks that are emerging across the global—multi-stakeholder initiatives involving companies, academia and civil society organisations, and local governments—promise to bring an ambitious sustainable development agenda to life.

As readers go through this special issue, there is a guiding question we want to leave you with—are you hopeful or alarmed—or perhaps wrestling with combination of these feelings? As the editors of the special issue, we are cautiously hopeful, perhaps even guardedly optimistic. Not only as individuals but especially as a PRME community we are far from being powerless, we have agency with the potential to facilitate the mindsets, commitments, and potential behaviours of scores of organizational leaders for decades to come. Now, more than ever we need to raise awareness and encourage action, protecting the gains we have made thus far in the

fundamental value of doing good while guiding those critical next steps in an ever-evolving journey.

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