"Ignorance was bliss, now I'm not ignorant and that is far more difficult" - Transdisciplinary Learning and Reflexivity in Responsible Management Education

Abstract

Purpose

The collapse of world economic systems brought the interconnectedness between business and global events sharply into focus. As Ken Starkey (2008) points out, 'leading business schools need to overcome their fascination with a particular form of finance and economics…to broaden their intellectual horizons…(and to) look at the lessons of history and other disciplines'. This paper provides evidence from three years of research on the Aston MBA suggesting that an emphasis on developing capabilities within a far broader, connected and reflexive business curriculum is what business students and practitioners now recognise as an essential way forward for Responsible Management Education.

Design/methodology/approach

This research paper examines the reflective accounts of 300 MBA students undertaking a transdisciplinary Business Ethics, Responsibility & Sustainability core module.

Findings

As Klein (2005) argues, transdisciplinarity is simultaneously an attitude and a form of action. The student reflections provide powerful discourses of individual learning and report a range of outcomes from finding 'the vocabulary or the confidence' to raise issues to acting as 'change agents' in the workplace.

Originality/value

As responsibility and sustainability requires learners, researchers and educators to engage with real world complexity, uncertainty and risk, conventional disciplinary study, especially within Business, often proves inadequate and partial. This paper demonstrates that creative and exploratory frames need to be developed to facilitate the development of more connected knowledge - informed by multiple stakeholders; able to contribute heterogeneous skills, perspectives and expertise.

1

Key words

Transdisciplinarity Reflection, Learning, Ethics, Sustainability, Responsible Management Education

The Context of Business and Business Schools

In the aftermath of the recent banking crisis, the media were quick to blame Business Schools with headlines such as 'Did poor teaching lead to crash? - Business Academics are accused of ignoring social and political questions (Times Higher Education, 2008). This is not new. One fact that emerged after previous financial scandals was that most of the Senior Executives involved at Enron, Arthur Anderson and World Com had MBAs from top business schools and in 2003 a survey of MBA students asked for definitions of business ethics at top US schools, all described ethics in market terms. In 2008, the same survey found that students had a broader view of business responsibilities but maximising shareholder value was still far ahead, followed by customer satisfaction. The environment was a very low priority and the respondents saw the main benefit of meeting social responsibilities as reputation and image (Aspen Institute, 2008). Thus issues of ethics, social responsibility and sustainability activities were perceived more as impression management or 'green wash'. This may not be surprising since ethics and sustainability was still an optional extra in many of the schools surveyed. It is what Starkey (2008) referred to as a 'fascination with a particular form of finance and economics' that sees the context of many business programmes explaining all activities and phenomena in terms of the market which in turn reinforces beliefs in both self interest and the power of extrinsic incentives. The emergence of the UN Principles of Responsible Management Education (www.unprme.org) set up under the umbrella of the UN Global Compact, aims to 'inspire and champion responsible management education, research and thought leadership globally'. The PRME initiative provides the opportunity to place these issues at the heart of business education and will be explored further in this paper.

The notion of self-interest is at the core of the ideas which have dominance in economic discourse, "This view of man has been a persistent one in economic models and the nature of economic theory seems to have been much influenced by this basic premise" Sen (1987). Social responsibilities and sustainability are also normally considered as

'externalities' which creates a disconnect between the business and the social and environmental issues. As Ian Davis (2005) contends in a rejoinder to Friedman's (1970) assertions (that there is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits), even the 'business case' for social responsibility and sustainability (which centres on considerations of reputation and risk) does not support this approach. Davis (2005: 69) writes,

> In all such cases billions of dollars of shareholder value have been put at stake as the result of social issues that ultimately feed into the fundamental drivers of corporate performance. In many instances a "business of business" outlook has blinded companies to outcomes (or shifts in their implicit social contract) which often could have been anticipated.

It is the dominance of markets and the market metaphor that also pervade assumptions and language in many business programmes. As Eccles and Nohria (1992) contend, "The way people talk about the world has everything to do with the way the world is ultimately understood and acted in". These assumptions and language become 'self fulfilling prophecies' in that they become taken for granted and normatively valued and therefore create conditions which make them come true (Ferraro, 2005). The question of language is critical to this debate, we have so many terms that appear to describe the same thing; or do they? Although, Corporate Social Responsibility ('CSR' and its synonyms) or Sustainability are gaining dominance as the terms used to describe this area, many writers prefer to talk about the ideas underpinning them. For example, all definitions of Sustainable development include ideas of continuance and long-term perspectives, such as the one often quoted from the Brundtland Commission Report (1987), " Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The problems with this definition, like many others, is that critics often view this term as an oxymoron because economic development, particularly when interpreted as continued and continual growth, conflicts with the needs of living within the carrying capacity of the planet's ecological systems (Blewitt, 2008). Another term used (mainly in the USA and implies agency) is Corporate Citizenship. Whilst the terms differ and the emphasis varies, the key point is that they are all concerned with social, economic and environmental considerations.

One useful and often- repeated definition of CSR is "business decision-making linked to ethical values, compliance with legal requirements, and respect for people, communities,

and the environment" 'Business for Social Responsibility' (2006). This definition positions CSR firmly in the context of ethical values but this is sometimes interpreted as being confined to individuals. Whereas it is important that such values should also fully extend to organisations in the worlds of business and management. As with all emerging fields, there is a danger that the teaching of CSR and Sustainability does not draw sufficiently on the context of the broader 'business ethics', environmental and social justice movements that have always promoted the obligation for behaviour to be guided by ethical principles and values that are sensitive to the need to protect our failing ecosystems. Interestingly, the MBA survey referred to earlier (Aspen Institute, 2008) also reports that most students reported that they felt likely to encounter conflict between personal values and what they are asked to do in business, yet the majority of respondents did not feel that their MBA programme prepared them for this. This may not be that surprising because although values (defined as, a small number of core ideas or cognitions present in every group or society about desirable end states, Rokeach, 1973) and value-led management (an approach to align corporate values with management practice) has gained popularity in organisational discourse and practice, the degree of fit between individual values and organisational culture (and its role in shaping the perception of workplace values) is rarely considered. Where values based management align corporate values that are predominantly maximising shareholder value with perceived employee values, many organisational processes include this in reward and recognition systems. For example, promoting careerist behaviours of individual promotion and impression management could mitigate against behaviours required by values promoting sustainability and social responsibility such as transparency and collaboration.

In addition, although social responsibility and sustainability are not new concepts, the expectation for businesses to provide visible evidence that they are behaving ethically is increasing. In surveys of graduate expectations of potential employers an alignment of personal and organisational values has been rising in importance for many respondents. A UK Higher Education Academy survey (2007) found that respondents 'considered the social and environmental ethics of an employer before making a career choice'. This trend also mirrors some of the changes in consumer behaviour and growing public awareness of social responsibility and sustainability issues. However, CSR and Sustainability are often positioned in the marketing or public relations/communication departments of organisations which may reflect the way it is perceived and business schools can reinforce

this approach by couching social responsibility and sustainability purely in the context of the business case and 'competitiveness' or 'reputation'.

The study

In examining the challenges for education in this area, we need to not just respond to the adverse publicity and critique the situation. As Mary Gentiles (2009) contends, it is not sufficient to 'blame a few bad apples' and run a 'school for scandal' in the classroom but change little. If we are to enable students as future business leaders and managers we need to prepare them for the complex ethical dilemmas and difficult choices they will encounter. This involves not just reviewing the content of such programmes but the approach and philosophies that drive them and 'to broaden the intellectual horizons' (Starkey, 2008). Whatever titles and definitions are used to describe the issues, some of the key questions to be addressed include:

· What is the approach and philosophy behind the teaching and what is included?
· Is it taught from one discipline or one perspective or is it multi disciplinary, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary in nature?
· Are ethical principles included at the heart of business programmes or is it on the periphery?
· To what extent are personal values explored and are students encouraged to reflect on their learning and experiences?

This paper presents evidence from the reflections of 300 MBA students on their experience of taking part in an ethics module that is core to their programme. It adopts a transdisciplinary approach and is taught by staff of different disciplines drawn from within and outside the Business School. It was clear from the outset of the module that it would need a different approach and mode of learning - learning that involves emotion and not just rational thinking and that promotes reflexivity. The module encourages students to wrestle seriously with ethical quandaries, difficult disagreeable tradeoffs between efficiency and justice and moral contradictions encountered in everyday life. It uses experiential learning to make students aware of the ethical, social and environmental dimensions of the business making process and enable students to understand the ethical components of managerial decision-making. Students are supported in developing skills of critical thinking, analysis and reflection and teaching methods are highly interactive.

Students critically analyse contemporary case studies and ethical dilemmas and apply their knowledge of theories, models, ethical frameworks and concepts to local and global issues. They also discuss live case studies with business practitioners and on a metacognitive level invariably entails engaging with the intellectually and practical imperatives of transdisciplinarity and reflexive practice.

On Transdisciplinarity

The terms multi disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary are frequently used in academic and professional discourses. Although sometimes their meanings are defined quite tightly there is still, occasionally, a certain looseness in the concepts are applied in practice. However, when studying, discussing or practicing business ethics social responsibility and sustainability whether in the workplace or the academy, what is clearly and immediately evident is that the concepts, perspectives and actions involved necessarily transgress disciplinary and professional boundaries. It is not possible, or even desirable, to contain ethical and sustainability interventions and practices without harming the capacity to make connections, to perceive the world holistically and to recognise that human behavior contaminates all manner of fields and socio-economic dimensions. As Basarab Nicolescu (2002) has written in her *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity,* transdisciplinarity concerns that which is *between*, *across* and *beyond* disciplines. Its principal goal is a fuller understanding of the contemporary world, one of the imperatives of which must involve exploring a putative unity of knowledge and a new art of living and working. Key to this is engaging with complexity both intellectually and practically as a wide variety of systems thinkers operating within the field of education for sustainable development have consistently stated (Sterling, 2004). Such an approach works towards realising a coherence through the linking or rather articulating, as in the articulation of one thing with another to produce a new unity, what may be marginal to one or indeed many disciplines and professional perspectives. The French sociologist Edgar Morin has noted that transdisciplinarity actualizes the notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts and that knowledge and experience, whether it be within science or business, always needs to be contextualised in order to be properly understood. For Morin, links can be created through concepts which he termed ''operateurs de reliance'' or 'linking operators' (quoted in Ramadier, 2004: 427). These new combinations or unties often require and motivate new thoughts, actions and processes of intellectual

6

apprehension. For the Chilean economist Manfred Max Neef whose work on human scale development has been seminal to many debates around sustainable development, transdisciplinarity offers considerable opportunities for reflection, reflexivity and research. He writes (Max Neef, 2004: 14-150),

> If I were asked to define our times, in few words, I would say that we have reached point in our evolution as human beings, in which we know very much, but understand very little. It goes without saying (evidences are clear) that linear logic and reductionism have contributed to our reaching unsuspected levels of knowledge. The knowing has grown exponentially, but only now we begin to suspect that that may not be sufficient, not for quantitative reasons, but for qualitative reasons. Knowledge is only one of the roads, only one side of the coin. The other road, the other side of the coin, is that of understanding.

Transdisciplinary understanding also marries closely with Portwood's (2000) notion of the learned worker being one who can exercise the capabilities of intellectual scepticism and focused intelligence. Indeed, professional development, or work based learning, may have its roots in transdisciplinarity. It is grounded a range of professional, academic and experiential communities of practice and uses tools that interpellate knowledge in a multi dimensional manner that is frequently situated in different organizational and professional contexts. As Gibbs and Costley write (2006: 346), "the primary concern of WBL [work based learning] is with application rather than being theory-led. The theory and reflection upon self in situ thus follows the practice". Thus, reflection is a critical factor in this form of work/professional learning as it is for transdisciplinarity and education for sustainability more broadly, but it must go further. It must go beyond the personal, personalised and often depoliticised reflections that may accompany the mantras of single and double loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978) and the many disciplinary frameworks characterising university study. A reflexive approach to the learning undertaken in the field of business ethics inevitably, and necessarily, cannot be contained with a 'business as usual' approach to business education. By its very nature, and indeed a sign of its success, as a site of critical reflection this module often elicited personal, political and economic challenges to students' pre-given assumptions and value frames.

On Reflexivity

Consequently, going further means a deep intellectual and practical engagement that is consciously and self consciously reflexive. For Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) modernity

together with all its consequent natural, environmental and anthropogenic risks, inevitably nurtures reflexivity as a defining part of modern life. Social practices are constantly being scrutinised and reshaped as a result of new information about the effects and consequences of these very practices. "What is characteristic of modernity" writes Giddens (1991: 39), "is not an embracing of the new for its own sake, but the presumption of wholesale reflexivity which of course includes reflection upon the nature of reflection itself". For Beck (1992; 1996) reflexivity means self-confrontation, self criticism and self transformation thereby confronting the risk society with a new modality he characterises as "reflexive modernization". However, in drilling down into the meaning and development of reflexivity, Ray Holland (1999) argues that transdisciplinarity is itself a form of reflexivity for it enables practitioners to disinter the underlying assumptions on which arguments, disciplines and indeed wholes paradigms rest. Such disinterring facilitates critique of those metaphors, thought styles, cosmologies, rules, rituals, mechanisms, intuitive strategies and meaning schemes that filter out inconvenient considerations and possibilities. For Holland (1999: 472), reflexivity is an "inalienable human capacity" that can itself be categorised in a number of different ways and at a number of different levels. The highest level of reflexivity regards disciplinary and professional paradigms as human constructs, potential obstacles to enlightenment, and entrapped by a blinkered ideological vision. This higher form of reflexivity is therefore, of necessity, uncompromisingly radical. Holland (1999: 476) writes,

> This is transdisciplinary reflexivity. Thus, the kind of enlightenment we seek at the end of the pathway to radical reflexivity is not simply another paradigm; it is a way of handling and transcending the interminable debates which have laid down disciplinary and paradigm boundaries. (...) It invites re-entry into the epistemological and sectional complexities of our human condition to intervene, 'knowingly' according to our ethical priorities.

All this can be experienced as deeply troubling and uncomfortable by both academics, students and professionals for traditional and expected certainties can quite easily be overturned. Reflexivity places the emphasis not so much on what is known but how we think we know (Pillow, 2003). It is part of that deconstructive turn whereby our claims to knowledge, that is how we think we know what we know, is contested and contestable. This is the perennial challenge of reflexive learning and to recognise and live this in one's academic or professional practice is to perceive knowledge and understanding as no longer innocent. As Pierre Bourdieu (1990: 21) writes in *The Logic of Practice,* social scientific analysis, particularly when exploring forms of classification, needs to objectify

"the objectivity that runs through the supposed site of subjectivity" that is social categories of thought, perceptions, unthought principles and representations of the "objective world". Reflexivity, and the accretion of reflexive knowledge, requires a degree of autonomy as well as a perspective that is neither distant or abstracted from contextual realities nor completely focused on real world practical issues and problems that demand uncontextualised solutions. Given this, Bourdieu links epistemology to questions of power and the generation of a reflexive knowledge that can only flourish in a cultural space not totally dominated by hegemonic interests and practices such as those often associated with politics and business. The reflexive practitioner needs space to think. S/he needs to inhabit an intellectual field that values reflexivity, autonomy and critique. In such an environment, reflexivity may take the form of a metaliteracy that is able to transcend restricted practical knowledge without denying the ontological reality of being in the world (Schirato & Webb, 2003). As Klein (2004) writes, transdisciplinarity is simultaneously an attitude and a form of action. The University has traditionally been such a space although it has not always been characterised by an institutionalized reflexivity and where this does exist is likely to be continually challenged by those hegemonic powers and conventional wisdoms referenced above.

On Reflective learning

Reflective learning is the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective (Boyd & Fales 1983). Moon (2004) notes that reflection is involved in some forms of learning and not in others. It appears and develops in intensity as learning moves along the continuum from a surface concern to remember the facts to a deeper approach to make sense of what they mean. For Moon learning may be conceived as consisting of a sequences of stages running from a superficial noticing through to working with meaning and finally to transformative learning relating very closely to the SOLO taxonomy (structure of learning outcomes) outlined by Biggs and Collis (1982) in their work on the evaluation of learning. "In the latter stage," Moon writes (2004:85) "the learner is willing extensively to modify her cognitive structure and is able to evaluate the sources of her knowledge and her process of learning". Scanlon and Chernomas's (1997) offer a three-stage model of the processes involved in reflective learning. The first stage of reflection is awareness, this might be stimulated by some uncomfortable thoughts or feelings or positive thoughts or feelings about a learning

situation or event. Without such awareness, reflection cannot occur. In this study, students
in the second stage, the individual critically analyses the situation, bringing to bear their
relevant knowledge and experiences as well as the application of new knowledge resulting
from the analysis process. This stage should involve critical thinking and evaluation, and
self-examination with accompanying growing self-awareness. The third and final stage
involves the development of a new perspective based upon one's critical analysis and the
application of new knowledge to the (learning) situation under reflection.

In this study, students have been encouraged to develop their awareness through
examination of their own personal values and use these to critically analyse their previous
experiences and current challenges. These are important stages in reflection and are
crucial to the final stage of application. Awareness and analysis provide insights but if
students are to move beyond this, they need to use this knowledge to initiate changes.

Data Analysis

The study comprises of 300 reflections of MBA students completing a Business Ethics,
Responsibility and Sustainability module. The students come from over thirty countries
with very different legal, social, cultural, philosophical (and theological) traditions. The
study explores the impact that the module has had on the students approach to issues of
ethics, social responsibility and sustainability. As part of the assessment for the module,
the students reflect on their own organisational experience in discussing the themes,
topics and issues raised as a result of their learning. They submit a reflective account of
their own values and experiences and comment upon whether their future decision-making
and actions may be influenced by their studies.

These reflections provided a 'rich' but unsystematic file of data as is common to qualitative
studies so the reflections were ordered into themes and coded. Grounded theory
(Charmaz, 2000) was used as a method of analysis and the AoM code of ethical
behaviour (Bryman & Bell, 2003) and good ethics practice (Dingwell, 1980; Burgess, 1982;
Lee, 1993) were followed to honour confidentiality. The reflections were analysed by two
researchers working each with two sets of transcripts (one kept intact and the other
dissected into categories and coded). Descriptive and open codes were used and these
were then ordered into axial coding so that the connections could be shown. These codes

were discussed and categories developed. The categories were then tested with a group of the respondents to maximise internal validity (Bradburn, 1983).

Findings

The core categories from the analysis included: the origin of own values and personal ethics, experience of ethical dilemmas; previous approaches and thought processes; future impact and thought processes; perceived barriers and changes implemented or planned. The approach and philosophy of the module featured strongly in the reflections with students commenting on the transdisciplinarity nature of the module and the exploration of a wide range of theoretical approaches.

"The diversity of the lecturers, each with their own area of expertise has afforded me a more detailed reflection on intellectually and mentally challenging issues." (Group 1, 44)

"I did not expect that this module would take me down unexpected paths concerning literature, but that has been the case" (Group 3, 9)

"The theoretical elements of the module have enabled me to gain a better understanding of my values and their drivers." (Group 4, 78)

"I have to admit that before I started this module my expectations were not that high. Another student said how can we spend 3 months studying ethics and sustainability?" (Group 1, 71)

The reflections have formed an important part of the module not only in the reports but also in the formal and informal class discussion.

"Students are often pressured into defending their knowledge rather than exhibiting their thinking. We were taken out of the passive role and placed into an active, thinking mode" (Group 1, 53)

"Self reflective writing is hard work, it makes you confront the reality that you may not always act in line with. The assignments really made us think about how we would act" (Group 2, 14)

Over the three years of the study many students have taken the opportunity provided by the reflective account to share very powerful discourses of their own journeys in exploring the real ethical dilemmas they face in business and the influence this has had on their lives.

"One of the first real "big hitters" for me was the realisation of how easy it is to find yourself demonstrating behaviours within a business context that go against the basic moral judgement that you apply to personal life." (Group 2, 45)

"Somewhere between my ambition and my ideals I lost my ethical compass." (Group 1, 17)

The accounts cover a range of views. Many report that the module 'provided them with the vocabulary' or 'the confidence' to raise issues and concerns or that they had previously thought about but did not know how to construct their arguments. This issue of 'voice' is an important theme. Others mention 'realising that others have similar thoughts' or that their studies provided 'legitimacy' for their own views.

Many students discussed having a 'heightened sense of awareness about issues in the media and thinking about matters at a much deeper level' or 'thinking about everyday activities such as shopping and travelling in a way they had not done so before'.

"The course has made me aware that the responsibility rests on me to translate what I have learnt to my work place, personal life and in the society around me." (Group 2, 87)

"I am much more likely to ask questions about the ways in which companies help the environment and the local community." (Group 4, 10)

"I am certainly in a position to challenge the board of directors and leaders in the organisation to consider our position and move ethics and sustainability higher up on the agenda." (Group 3, 39)

A number of students felt the module empowered them to act as agents of change in their place of work. One who started to question details of contracts because of health and safety concerns that had not occurred to them before; another who changed the distribution system of the company because of the environmental impacts and a company director, who was negotiating to outsource the manufacture of products to India, realised that there were many more factors to consider in taking such decisions, other than price and quality of the goods. What had seemed a simple decision (when considered purely in market terms) required far more careful thought and planning to effect a more appropriate, responsible and sustainable outcome. This can be summed up by a student who was overheard complaining:

"Ignorance was bliss, now I'm not ignorant and that is far more difficult"

A number of International students grappled with issues that they saw as matters of conscience and discussed ways in which their own position may enable them to make a difference to future policies and practices when they return.

"[I will] be morally courageous and encourage others to do the same… put decision making process in place that requires people to consider the ethical dimension of business decisions… favour hiring and promoting people with a well grounded sense of personal ethics." (Group 1, 61)

There were also Western European and US students who found the discussion of social, environmental and ethical issues in such a diverse group challenging. For example; it often brought home the connections between poverty and sustainability and emphasised the complexity of issues that are not black and white but often many shades of grey.

"Taken me out of my comfort zone – my safe western existence" (Group 2, 16)

At the other end of the spectrum, there are those who said that 'without overstating the case – this module has changed my life'. An example of how such learning has the potential to result in actual change rather than adaptation. This includes a student who worked for a scientific organisation where the ethics of the 'science' was frequently raised but there were no such discussions about the ethics of the organisation. As a result of studying the module, the student spoke to the chairman of the company and she was

asked to help develop ethical codes for the company. Other students realised that they felt uncomfortable about working for an organisation and taking the module had helped to 'crystallise' their thoughts and this prompted them to change career.

"Completing this course in Business, Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability has made me uncomfortable in my current workplace and prompted me to start looking for alternative employment." (Group 4, 56)

"I grew more critical of the way I was expected to behave… I began to notice that the requests to meet certain targets by the business were simply unethical… I decided to resign… At the end of my third week in a new job, I find it to be the best decision of my career." (Group 2, 21)

Finally, many students reviewed their approach to business.
"I realise that I need to place myself in other shoes by listening more to people around me… Being humble and following moral practices is a success factor for good management in this century." (Group 2, 83)

"I realised there is more to being ethical in business than knowing right from wrong or good from bad." (Group 2, 30)

"Laws alone cannot be used as a defence against acting unethically." (Group 4, 96)

"I have learned that it is possible to become a success whilst maintaining an ethical and social backbone" (Group 3, 65)

Discussion

It is apparent that although Ethics, Social Responsibility and Sustainability have gained a higher profile in the current academic environment, a survey of UK Deans at an Association of Business Schools conference in October 2008 revealed that these issues had not yet become embedded in the mainstream of business-related education. The reflections of the students overwhelmingly reported an awakening and connection between their personal values and a desire for change in business. For most of the students, the programme was not the first University business education they had

undetaken but very few had encountered approaches that enabled them to think beyond traditional business models.

The UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative which is set up to 'inspire and champion responsible management education, research and thought leadership globally' provides the opportunity to place these issues at the heart of business education. The principles are intended to serve as guidelines for management education providers to better prepare current and future organisational leaders in their dual roles as economic developer and societal steward. This provides academics working in this area an opportunity to use their agency through membership of an external organisation to redirect the strategy of their institution. The first Global Forum for the UN Global Principles Responsible Management Education in December 2008 (attended by 84 Universities) looked at moving the principles into action. One of the key issues discussed at the forum was the extent to which PRME could be effective, especially since it is not planned to incorporate it into accreditation processes. This could be seen as a strength because a 'light touch' may encourage more Deans to participate; yet without the framework of accreditation, some fear that it will not have priority. Business schools that are signatories to the principles are required to report annually on their progress within two years of joining and the first group of schools has now reported. The outcomes of this were reported at the second UN PRME Global Forum that had 215 delegates from 37 countries. Over 300 business schools from 62 countries now endorse PRME, which in just over two years is very encouraging. Yet with more than 12,000 business degree granting institutions worldwide, there is a way to go. PRME aspires to the goal of 1,000 PRME schools by 2015.

PRME has been set up under the UN Global Compact that is the UN organisation working with businesses (mainly MNCs) on the agenda of Sustainability, Human Rights, Anti Corruption and Labour Rights. In celebrating it's 10th Anniversary, the number of organisations joining the Global Compact has risen to from 300 at its inception to over 4000 today. What is interesting and may provide lessons for PRME is that in recent years, over 1000 organisations have been 'delisted' for non- compliance over reporting. This has also led to not only listed organisations paying more attention to their responsibilities but has increased the number of organisations applying to join up to the Global Compact. The final words of the Principles state that, 'We understand that our own organisational

practices should serve as example of the values and attitudes we convey to our students'. As Business Schools, it is not sufficient to simply review ethics, social responsibility & sustainability within the curriculum and research practice but it should also be mirrored in the way the organisations are run. It is important that after being part of the problem for so long, businesses and Business Schools become a key part of the solution to irresponsible management and unsustainable development and irresponsible and unsustainable education. There are already a large number of well known green businesses, the most well known probably being Interface (Anderson, 1998) and green business gurus such as Paul Hawken (1994) who have been promoting environmental and socially business practices for a great many years. Similarly, there are good examples of ethical and responsible businesses. Even so-called baddies of the corporate world, such as Wal-Mart are concerned to clean up their act, and the emergence of ethical MBAs particularly in the United States and other sustainability programmes specifically aimed at the corporate sector is clear evidence that David Orr's (1994) famous quip about universities over the years producing highly educated people ably equipped to trash the planet has finally hit home. In a world where we are running out of oil, producing far too many unnecessary goods and services, where climate change is an accelerating and increasingly alarming reality, where global poverty and hunger is an ever present reality not to mention banking practices that create global financial instability, it is important that Business Schools are themselves reflective, reflexive and critical practitioners. If they are not, then their students and clients will not be able to access the knowledge, understanding skills and capabilities necessary for fashioning a business practice that truly meets the needs of this and future generations. However, changing established conduct, deeply rooted practices and ways of thinking is not easy although certainly possible as this study suggests. However, changing the ways whole institutions thinks and behave is another matter and given the economic challenges higher education institutions face in the UK and elsewhere presents an even greater challenge. The point, of course, is that business and Business Schools cannot afford to ignore the social, economic and environmental agenda for if they do, the critics who suggest that the term "ethical business", like the term "sustainable development", is an oxymoron will be proved right.

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