GCU
Glasgow Caledonian University

University for the Common Good

Context and the institutionalisation of PRME: the case of the University for the Common Good
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Abstract

This study assesses the significance of the degree of senior management commitment in determining the adoption and implementation of the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). A case study of a Scottish PRME signatory institution confirms the suggestion in the literature that top-down commitment is a key driver of the implementation of PRME, but also suggests that the nature and shape of this commitment is likely to vary from Institution to Institution. It is concluded that attention to the local context and prevailing organisational circumstances is required to explain the timing of institutional commitment to PRME, the specific challenges that business school leaders face as they strive to institutionalise PRME, and the types of strategy employed.

1. Introduction

In the past thirteen years, higher education systems in many parts of the world have experienced the emergence and development of policies and initiatives that promote education for sustainable development (ESD), with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), through the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) taking the lead in these efforts. According to UNESCO, ESD[1] is about enabling us to constructively address present and future global challenges, create more sustainable and resilient societies, and empower learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society.

UNESCO sponsored a decade of ESD in the period 2004-2014, and ~~now~~ *currently* curates a Global Action Programme (GAP)[2]. While UNESCO promotes ESD at all levels of education, PRME is targeted primarily at business and management schools, *and has been described as* the first large-scale global initiative for change in business education *(*Forray and

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[1] http://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd
[2] http://en.unesco.org/gap

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Leigh 2012:301). *Furthermore on* the launch of PRME in 2007[3], the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban-Ki Moon, claimed that:

 "*The Principles for Responsible Management Education have the capacity to take the case for universal values and business into classrooms on every continent*".

These developments may be seen as a global policy trend towards extracting a greater contribution from universities to society as a whole (Epstein et al, 2008), through the development of education for sustainable development. At the same time contextual factors that reflect local histories, meanings, and organisational circumstances are likely to have an impact on whether at all, or how, such policies are adopted and adapted at national and organisational levels. Policies that originate outside local education systems have been called '*travelling policies*' and the local factors influencing acceptance, adaptation, or rejection of travelling policies *are* conceptualised as '*local spaces*' (Alexiadou and Jones, 2001). This paper examines the reception of the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education in the 'local space' of a modern Scottish University in order to identify, in action, effective strategies for the institutionalisation of PRME.

1.1 Background: Commitment to PRME on a national level

In November 2016, the PRME website[4] *identified 655* signatories of PRME. The United Kingdom has a high proportion of PRME signatories (65), representing some 50% of the total business school population; whereas the number of PRME signatories in China (15), India (37) and Germany (30) is proportionally much lower. In the absence of any research that explains such differences in institutional commitment to PRME on a national level, one may assume that they are related to differences in the nature and scope of adoption of the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) by businesses (and business schools) in different geographical and national business contexts as reported by Matten and Moon (2008). That said, it is acknowledged that business schools do not necessarily need to be a

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[3] http://www.unprme.org/about-prme/history/index.php
[4] http://www.unprme.org/participants/index.php

signatory to PRME to integrate responsible management education in to organizational thinking and strategies (Burchell et al., 2014).

1.2 Commitment to PRME on an organisational level

Research on commitment to PRME *at* an organisational level in many countries of the world is far more extensive than that at an aggregate national level, and can be divided in to two categories. The dominant category focuses on curricular change, teaching and pedagogies for RME-related subjects, organised broadly around umbrella concepts of sustainability (economic, social and environmental), responsible leadership and management, and ethics. Hayes, Parkes and Murray (2016:19) report that:

"Although publications relating to PRME only emerged some years after the initiative was announced, research into provision of RME in the form of "ethics-based" courses and programmes has a much longer pedigree"."

Excellent overviews *of such research* can be found in Matten and Moon (2004), and more recently *in* Maloni, Shane and Napshin (2012), Doh and Tashman (2014); and Sunley and Leigh (2016).

The less dominant, but emerging category of research in to the institiutionalisation of PRME takes a broader organisational, one could argue more strategic perspective, that goes well beyond the curriculum, placing more focus on the integration (or lack of integration) of PRME in to the wider organisation. Institutionalisation here refers to something that *"...is embedded in the design of the systems, structures, and procedures of the organization"* (Crossan, Lane, White & Djurfeldt, 1995:347)

Recent examples of this body of literature include Solitander et al. (2012), Escudero et al., (2015), and Warin and Beddewala (2016), who, in different ways, identify and categorise barriers *to*, *and* drivers and enablers *of* the implementation of PRME, offering guidance to members of PRME signatory institutions that may facilitate institutionalisation

2. Literature
2.1 Barriers to and Drivers and Enablers of Implementation of PRME

What factors drive, facilitate and hinder broader implementation of responsible management education? Warin and Beddewela (2016) attempted to answer this question by identifying a range of internal and external factors, constructed from nineteen interviews with faculty from seventeen PRME signatory institutions in the United Kingdom. Amongst the external factors (p.304) were the PRME initiative itself, the standards of international accreditation bodies, growing pressures from professional bodies (such as for accountants), and a growing interest in responsible management by business itself. Top of the internal factors list (p.302) were faculty themselves (especially those with an ethics or corporate social responsibility interest), only then followed by the leadership of the institution, interest from students, the existing ethos or philosophy of the institution, and prevailing research agendas. Warin and Beddewala (2016:316) used their findings to develop a set of drivers, barriers and enablers for institutionalising responsible management education in UK business schools, where institutionalization. An abridged summary of these is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Drivers, barriers and enablers for institutionalising RME (in the UK)

Drivers	Barriers	Enablers
Accreditation EQUIS and AACSB	Administrative processes	Strategic direction and values of the Institution
Dedicated staff members	Resources (time and money)	Participation in PRME
Management support	Staff resistance: relevance	Mission/vision terminology
Student interest: Take-up of RME	Time to change curriculum	

Of note here are the examples of enablers, many of which can be deemed 'strategic', and fall in to the domain of the Dean and senior management, given that they relate to questions of institutional vision and mission, strategic direction and values, and commitment to PRME (for which the signature of the Dean or Chief Executive of a signatory is required). However, when it comes to 'practical' suggestions to promote the drivers and enablers and combat the barriers Warin and Beddewala (2016:318) do so not only for the Dean, but also for senior and junior lecturers, signaling a need for broad participation in

the efforts to institutionalise PRME. Examples of recommended actions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Sample of recommendations to overcome barriers to implementation

Players	Recommended actions
Deans	Input RME-related terms within the strategic direction and plans of the business school Provide resources such as time and finance allocation to faculty working on RME agenda
Senior Lecturers	Understand and support the need for change towards a responsibility agenda Create committees to support raising the RME agenda Acquire knowledge of organisational structures to get changes pushed through quicker
Junior Lecturers	Bring in new pedagogical methods for teaching RME to large numbers of students Promote RME-related courses and modules to increase student take-up.

Solitander et al., (2012) in contrast take an 'insider' approach to their perspectives on the institutionalisation of PRME, developing a set of recommendations for internal 'Champions' pushing for implementation of PRME based on their own experiences in that role in their respective institutions, Hanken in Finland and Audencia in France. They define (p343) internal PRME Champions as:

"*Faculty members, who through engagement in teaching, research and educational politics, navigate the tensions between individual and organizational priorities in implementing PRME*".

They argue that while Champions are not necessarily located at the top of the School's hierarchy, they do need to communicate directly with people involved in strategic-decision-making. By placing themselves at the centre of their research, Solitander et al. (ibid.) emphasise the political dimension of change associated with implementing PRME, and the importance of understanding institutional context to induce reflexivity in overcoming some of the barriers to what Solitander et al., (2012:337) call "*organisational learning and change for responsible management education*".

Like Warin and Beddewala (2016), Solitander et al. (ibid) use first hand experience to compile a table of challenges to implementation of PRME (p.358) that they categorise as strategic, structural and cultural barriers to organizational learning that impede institutionalisation of PRME. Examples of these are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Summary of barriers to organisational learning for PRME

Challenges	
Strategic barriers	Questioning the strategic importance of CR in the curriculum
Structural barriers	Balance between stand-alone courses and integration in to all disciplines. "Not invented here' syndrome amongst faculty of certain subjects
Cultural barriers	Business schools not reflexive organisations – difficulty of seeing the familiar as new for leadership, faculty, and students alike.

Solitander et al. (ibid.) then go on to make recommendations to fellow Champions' to promote organisational learning for implementation of PRME, as summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Selected recommendations for internal PRME Champions

Challenges	Recommended actions to overcome barriers
Strategic barriers	"Lighting the path" for others to discover their own interest in implementing PRME. Making explicit the link between accreditations and CR in the curriculum
Structural barriers	Building on existing resources to create new structures. Encouraging students to raise CR issues within courses/disciplines that lack such understanding.
Cultural barriers	Increased problematisation in teaching about the image of business school teaching as 'value free'. Use PRME as a tool for seeing the familiar as new.

The work of both sets of author is indicative of a growing body of research that documents the uneven, bumpy and challenging journey that is called implementation of PRME, and aims to help 'fellow PRME travellers' along on their journey. However, Escudero et al. (2015:1) concluded that while the repository of work on efforts, and guidance, to support understanding and implementation of PRME is impressive, what the PRME community did not have was "*a guide on how to systematically advance when embarking on such an ambitious transformation at the organisational school level*".

The Transformational Model (TM) for Implementation of PRME (Escudero et. al., 2015) illustrated in Figure 1 below, authored by a group of highly committed faculty in PRME signatory institutions, was designed to fill this gap. The TM draws on the accumulated experience of PRME signatories around the world, and its intended use is illuminated by a number of vignette case studies from PRME signatory institutions for each stage of the model.

Figure 1: The Transformational Model for the Implementation of PRME

Authors of the TM outline five main characteristics that set the limits and contours of the model, as follows:

Table 5: Characteristics of the Transformational Model for Implementation of PRME

1.Commitment is the main driver	PRME will become an integral part of a school's strategy only if there is real commitment to the values of corporate sustainability. In order to commit to the values of sustainability, a school must understand its potential.
2.PRME is a dual process	Without the explicit commitment of the leadership (top-down) on the one hand, and the faculty and non-academic staff (bottom-up) on the other, PRME will not be effectively implemented.
3.Gradual change is the only way	…to implement PRME: Implementation of PRME is critically more than a one-time experience. It should be understood as a process of continuous improvement.
4. Institutions are limited by capacity	While business schools and management-related educational institutions have great potential and are highly influential in society, in business terms they are small or medium enterprises and therefore have limited capacity.
5. Implementation of PRME	…is the embedding of the values of corporate sustainability and responsibility into the daily activities of a higher education institution through a wide range of potential projects, actions, policies, and structural changes

2.2. The Importance of Leadership in Institutionalisation of PRME

The work above reflects an emerging consensus in the literature of the critical importance of senior management commitment and action in going beyond compliance with reporting requirements when committing to PRME. In an interview with Manuel Escudero, widely acknowledged as the architect of PRME, Alcaraz and Thuruvattal (2010:546) quote him as saying that "*The Dean could set the tone, from upstairs…..a leader leads the way*". Warin and Beddewela (2014:319) claim that a key driver of institutionalisation of PRME

is management support where "*Schools with deans and vice chancellors that support this make more changes {than those that do not give that support}*". The Transformational Model for PRME Implementation (Escudero et al., 2015:1) provide a number of examples from PRME signatories to conclude that "Top down commitment from leadership is the main driver….Participating in PRME must be thought of as a "*strategic journey that evolves over time through different stages*".

The importance attached to senior management commitment is important because adoption of PRME "*could lead to a paradigm change in business schools*" (Louw, 2014:184). A change of this nature suggests *strategic* change, which according to Gioia and Chittipedi (1991:433)

"*…involves an attempt to change current modes of cognition and action, to enable the organisation to take advantage of important opportunities or to cope with consequential environmental threats….The initiation of strategic change can be viewed as a process whereby the CEO makes sense of an altered vision of the organization and engages in cycles of negotiated social construction activities to influence stakeholders and constituents to accept that vision.*"

Typically, the Dean is portrayed as one whose foremost roles involve the formulation and implementation of strategies. Thompson et al, (2013:43) suggest that this first of all involves definition of a strategic vision, mission, values, and strategic objectives, all of which they state are "basic direction-setting tasks" for an organisation. Rather than provide any one of numerous definitions of these concepts, in this paper I will use Thomson et al.'s (2013:27) succinct explanation of the purpose of each of these in the context of strategic management. Strategic vision sets an organisation's long-term direction. A mission describes an organisation's purpose. The values of an organization are the beliefs, traits and behavioural norms that management has determined should guide the pursuit of its vision and mission. An organisation's values guide the pursuit of the vision and the mission. Strategic objectives are used to measure an organisation's performance and progress.

2.3 The role of context and process

This literature draws attention to two key issues that shape institutionalisation of PRME, namely context and process. Pettigrew (1987:658) argues that context explains the 'why' of any strategy related to change, identifying two dimensions, while process helps us to understand the 'how' of strategy. The external context is the social, economic, political, and competitive environment in which an organisation operates. The internal context refers to the structure, corporate culture, and political context within the organisation, through which ideas for change have to proceed.

The centrality of these two forms of context shapes the direction of the case study reported here. The central research questions were: why did this School commit to PRME at this time? What were the prevailing circumstances and did they influence commitment to PRME? If so, how? Who drove commitment to PRME? What actions did they take? What was done to institutionalize PRME? What needed to be changed?

3. Methodology

The study of changing situations is typically a subtle and evolving process and better done using approaches that are non-intrusive, and capable of tracing changes over a period of time (Goiai and Chittipedi, 1991). For this reason a case study methodology is used to capture the evolution of senior management commitment to PRME over a four year period, covering the period prior to commitment (2011) through to attempts at implementation and institutionalisation (2015).

3.1 Data Collection

Data used to compile this case study comes from a wide range of internal university documents published or issued in the period 2011-2015 that can be divided into five categories. The first set of data comes from university news sources published on the web-pages. This data provided important details of the University context prior to, and post commitment to PRME – for example details of major restructuring, and important appointments such as that of the

Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus. The second set of data relates to University and Business School policy documents – for example mission statements, strategic objectives, new learning and teaching policies and programme approval documents. The third set of data relates to business-school specific emails, announcements and working papers – for example communications to faculty confirming changes taking place; and minutes of meetings. A fourth set of data comes in the form of notes taken by the author, a faculty member, and 'PRME Champion' in the case study Institution, at meetings both in the University and at PRME events outside of it. The fifth set of data used are written explanations of decisions taken by senior management from a key informant.

Being a full-time GCU faculty member who became involved in PRME at an early stage following commitment exposed me to unfolding events. Being an 'insider' meant that I could observe what Goffman (1990) terms 'front stage' and 'back stage' behaviour, where front stage refers to official statements and accounts of what is happening, and back stage creates opportunities to see beyond any 'social front'.

3.2 Insider research

The location of the researcher within the 'case' being explored, has advantages and disadvantages. As an 'insider' and existing faculty member, the researcher is immersed in the social context being studied, and adopts dual roles simultaneously of active participator in the organisation's activities and observer of those activities (Moeran, 1997). This position provided access to documents, meetings and communications that may otherwise be unavailable. Amongst the disadvantages of this 'insider' status, are the risks of 'going native', personal bias, taking things for granted, developing myopia, and assuming that my own perspective is far more widespread than it actually is (Mercer, 2007). Mindful of these risks, I have attempted to exercise reflexivity (Alvesson and Skolberg, 2000) throughout, drawn on a wide range of data sources to piece together the case, and sought written key informant clarification to make findings more robust.

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 Ordering and analysis

Key themes and words from the literature shaped ordering and analysis of data, with a focus on identification of events and decisions made by leadership that signaled a significant change in the Institution's commitment to the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education. A catalogue was developed of changes introduced, strategies announced, policies developed, structures created, and important communications delivered. Events and decisions were judged to be worthy of inclusion in the case if it they suggested that PRME was becoming an '*integral part of a School's strategy*" (Escudero et al, 2015:2). Of significance here were publication of a new School strategy to 2018 with a revised vision, mission, and strategic objectives. This process was enriched with a search for responsible management education (RME) terms within the strategic direction and plans of the business school, which Warin and Beddewala (2016) suggested would facilitate implementation of PRME. Language from the six Principles for Responsible Management Education informed this stage, and included 'global social responsibility', 'sustainable value for business and society', 'sustainable social, environmental and economic value'.

3.3.2 Developing a timeline of events

The above analysis facilitated assembly of a timeline of key events and senior management decisions taken in relation to PRME. This revealed different temporal phases on GCU's PRME journey. What we may call the PRME 'germination' phase of a year (2011-12) covers the period preceding commitment to PRME, during which a new Executive Dean was appointed, plans for the merger of Caledonian Business School and the School of Law and Social Sciences took real shape, and the Business School was given a new name and identity. This was followed by the 'implementation' phase in the period 2012-2015.

4. Institutional Context of the Case Study

Glasgow Caledonian University was created in 1993 from an amalgamation of two Scottish institutions, one with origins dating back to 1875, and the other to 1971. The University today has some 20,000 students on campuses in Glasgow, London, Oman, Bangladesh and New York. With a historic motto to work "For the Common Weal" (weal means 'good' in old Scots), GCU prides itself on its historical social mission, characterised by an emphasis on widening access to education, applied research, and professional and vocational training.

The trigger for GCU's PRME journey can be traced to 2011, which marked a period of major change in the University. The stated aim of the strategic change was to secure the University's long-term sustainability and deliver ambitious plans for growth and innovation during a challenging external context for higher education, characterized by less favourable demographics, and cuts in government funding. This was to be achieved by consolidating core strengths and areas of academic excellence from its existing six Schools into three larger Schools – Health and Life Sciences; Engineering, Computing and the Environment; and Business, Law and Social Sciences.

The main focus of this case study is on what was initially known as the School of Business, Law and Social Sciences (SBLSS) – a merger of two previous schools: *the* Caledonian Business School and the School of Law and Social Sciences. The major player in this case is the newly-appointed Executive Dean (ED) for the merged School, a newcomer to GCU, who had experience of organisational restructuring in two previous posts, and had previously made a commitment to PRME in one of these. The ED role carried with it a seat on the Executive Board, as Pro Vice Chancellor, thereby creating a ready channel of communication between School and University, and to the Executive Board. The new ED joined GCU one year before the University installed Nobel Laureate, anti-poverty campaigner and one of the founding fathers of 'social business', Professor Muhammad Yunus as Chancellor, a figurehead role for the whole University.

5. Seeds and Growth of GCU's PRME Journey

In the case of GCU, the seeds of a new strategy for the new School, that included PRME, were sown prior to the assumption of office, arguably with the very appointment of this particular person to the ED role by the University Executive. According to de Janas, van der Graf and Watkins (2013), in making leadership appointments, organisations invest most of their time, energy, and attention in choosing the right person for the job. An indication of why this person was chosen can be sensed from the ED's reflections on his thinking prior to joining the University.

"I made clear at interview what could be achieved given the merger of Caledonian Business School and the School of Social Sciences and Law to create a distinctive and forward-looking School, including participating in PRME, and one that could reflect the mission of the University, all illustrated by what I had done at my previous business school".

This suggests that prior to appointment the ED clearly saw an opportunity to create something new, and understood the need to frame any proposed change in a way that 'made sense' or fitted in to what is an inevitable 'revised system of meaning' that accompanies any strategic change effort (Ranson, Hinings and Greenwood, 1980). Of significance here is the clear intention of aligning School strategy to University strategy, and early recognition of a 'fit' between ideas for the newly merged School, PRME and the ethos of the University characterised by its motto "For the Common Weal".

While this statement suggests that the ED had some sort of idea or vision for the newly merged school at the time of interview, he did not make any immediate announcement on his intentions when taking up his position a few months later. Rather, the first six months of appointment saw the ED inviting every member of staff for a 15-minute introductory discussion, suggesting a need to develop a deeper sense of the organization's internal and external environment before finalizing and communicating plans for change (Thomas and Daniel, 1990). The ED explained this in the following way:

"I always do this when I start somewhere …… a 15 minute meeting with everyone, irrespective of status or role everyone got 15 minutes. I learned a lot. It took several months as it's a large School of course….People were worrying about their jobs as well as the implications of a merger of Schools,

all no doubt heightened by the arrival of 3 externally-appointed Exec Deans including me. I also considered other aspects of the internal environment, not least the other two Schools and the activities elsewhere, viz. London, and the external environment".

It appears that this exercise helped the ED to develop his conception of the organisation, individuals within it, and a sense of the prevailing organisational context, politics and culture. This phase was followed, shortly after, by a public declaration of intentions in a meeting for all staff in the School.

5.1 What's in a name?

In this meeting the ED proposed a new name and rationale for the School (abandoning the School of Business, Law and Social Science), and outlined a vision for the future of the School, along with some strategic objectives, which included future pursuit of international accreditations. The new name proposed for the School was "Glasgow School *for* Business and Society" (GSBS), evidently connecting business with society, and 'speaking' to both sets of faculty coming together in the newly merged School: business and management faculty and social scientists. The ED illuminated the rationale for this name in the following way:

"The advert for 3 Exec Deans and PVCs referred to the 'School of Business, Law and Social Sciences' and I felt we could be a bit more creative than that, but the idea for the name of the School came a couple of months after starting and was intended for a launch in September 2011.

It was important to be distinctive, reflecting the constituent parts of the School, the fact that the whole could be greater than the sum of the parts, {reflecting} the mission of the School <u>and</u> the University, making a statement about what we stood for and hence the italicised and bold 'for' in the title. In an email to the School I listed all the factors that I took in to account, suggested the name, and requested feedback…. Feedback was positive and I then sought approval from the Principal".

5.2 University versus Business School Commitment to PRME

In addition to seeking Executive Board approval for the new name, the ED proposed that the Institution's commitment to PRME be at the level of the University, rather than at the level of the School (which many signatories opt for). The ED's explanation behind this decision is as follows:

"It's important in my view to develop responsible leaders/managers irrespective of the sector {discipline}. Students may initially train to be nurses

or engineers or whatever but, as practitioners they need to be 'responsible' but they will also have aspirations to be promoted and will become 'managers'. There is benefit in early exposure to the values underpinning PRME and this was why, in my view, it needed to be University-wide, further reinforcing, in a practical sense, the University's work 'for the common good'.

While the PRME acronym explicitly refers to 'management education' this ED, and the Principal of the University who signed GCU's commitment, apparently took a much broader reading, and saw potential beyond the business school, with applicability to the other two Schools. What this suggests is a warm reception for PRME in GCU, due to a resonance between the values and mission of the 'parent' body of the business school and the values and purpose of PRME. Escudero et al (2015:7) suggest that compatibility of organizational and PRME values has its advantages:

"*For some PRME may well align with a pre-existing value set that defines the institutional identity. This may be the case of schools that have been born within a tradition of where care for communities and social justice are central to their mission. For such institutions, the Principles of PRME resonate with existing values in a way that makes commitment at the highest levels of the School a natural fit.*"

In the case of GCU this became increasingly true, as reflected in its newly published values: *Creativity, Responsibility, Integrity and Confidence*, two of which (Responsibility and Integrity) speak directly to core themes of PRME, with *creativity* arguably a third, as it speaks to PRME's call for innovation and change.

With regard to University, as opposed to Business School-level commitment, one could also argue that having a University Principal's signature on a commitment letter to the United Nations signals an even deeper institutional commitment than the signature of a Dean (no disrespect to Deans!). The internal benefit of commitment at the highest institutional level could also prove crucial at times when a Dean departs and a new Dean, who may not necessarily knowledgeable or supportive of PRME, arrives. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a change in Dean can account for waning commitment to PRME, and this has led to a number of PRME signatories being delisted for failure to even comply with minimal requirements of being a signatory. Getting commitment to PRME from the Institutions' highest level

officer may therefore serve to 'future proof' institutional commitment, as University Principal's often serve for much longer than business school Deans. Commitment at this level may also prove valuable in attempts to secure resources for PRME activities, as a Principal's (Chief Executive) support for an initiative often carries a greater 'warrant' in bids for support and resources than those without it.

Escudero et al (2015:7) do however warn that 'natural fit' between PRME and an existing value set may prove as much an impediment to using PRME as a driver of change, as an asset:

"*In some instances a pre-existing commitment to humanistic values may act as a deterrent of a systemic, strategic approach to PRME and an obstacle to fully benefitting from the initiative - expressions like "since we already have a set of humanistic values, we may participate in PRME but we do not need additional efforts or changes" portray this sort of position*".

6. Visioning Change in the PRME Context

Heeding the warning of Escudero et al (ibid) for signatories with PRME-centric values not to be complacent, it is perhaps an appropriate time to acknowledge Solitander et al.'s claim (2012: 340) that the challenge of PRME "*is enabling change to a new state, that is responsible management education*". This prompts the question of how those initiating and leading PRME efforts signal or present what this change and future new state looks like. One method of doing this is by articulating a clear vision to organisational members, where vision refers to a cognitive image of a desired future state (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). This approach was taken by the ED of GSBS when he (literally) presented his vision for the newly-merged School in 2011, as follows:

"*To be internationally renowned for developing socially responsible and innovative leaders capable of operating in different cultures and fulfilling business or community leadership roles*".

Resonance with the values and message of PRME are not only clear, but this vision also speaks to both sets of faculty in the newly merged GSBS: faculty more oriented to business and management on the one hand, and those more oriented to community and wider society on the other. However, despite clarity in the statement, the vision does not provide any image of an end state. What does fulfilling the new vision look like? What will GSBS be doing

differently in the future? What will the proposed changes and GSBS 'makeover' involving PRME look like if realised?

6.1 Sensegiving

The ED shared his vision of this future 'new state' for GSBS in the form of an 'imagined' newspaper article about GSBS, published in the Financial Times in 2020. Excerpts of this article read as follows:

"The higher education landscape in UK and Scotland was significantly different 10 years ago and it is now clear how forward-looking, radical and innovative GCU was in August 2011 to bring together the disciplines of business, law and social sciences. The economic and financial situation at the time looked, if anything, worse than at the time of Lehman's collapse in 2008 and there were real fears of a double-dip recession with huge uncertainty in the Eurozone and across the world. The financial services sector looked disconnected from society; business schools did not give sufficient emphasis to the social, historical and ethical context within which business needed to be conducted; social science graduates seemed not to appreciate the importance of business in and for society.

Glasgow School for Business and Society challenged conventional thinking and has now established an international reputation for its highly-employable graduates, cutting-edge research, excellent teaching and extensive engagement with business and community sectors. It has established an outstanding reputation for the development of responsible leaders, leaders who are entrepreneurial in their thinking, international in their outlook and socially-responsible in their actions".

These communications seek to present to organisational members a framework for imagining and understanding the new identity and newly-framed purpose of the 'new' GSBS. It was intended to supplant or re-frame existing conceptions of management, staff and students in the two 'old' schools. This communication can be understood in terms of what Whetten (1984) terms 'sensegiving'. Sensegiving refers to the process of trying to shape the way others construct meaning of what is happening, towards a preferred redefinition of organisational reality – a desired future state.

This image of the future 'speaks' to multiple stakeholders: to University management (who are forward-looking, radical and innovative); to faculty (with an international reputation for cutting-edge research, excellent teaching, and extensive engagement with business and community sectors); to

students (responsible leaders who are entrepreneurial in their thinking, international in their outlook and socially responsible in their actions). Juxtaposing the future with the past, this vision of a future state draws a vivid picture of the nature of envisaged 'transformation' from past to present, and signals areas in which desired changes will be sought.

Publication of the vision[5] was accompanied by a new mission for the school, in which the connection between both business and society are made. The mission read as follows:

"*To offer excellent and accessible higher education opportunities in Glasgow and London for the benefit of business and society, nationally and internationally.*"

7. From Vision to Strategy

In terms of Burchell et al's (2014) findings, commitment to PRME in the case of GSBS can be seen as a key (but not sole) signifier of the School's strategic direction. Commitment to PRME here can be regarded not as an end in itself, but one of several means to an end, the primary one of which was to achieve the Vision for 2020 presented earlier, which in terms of a strategy to do that included the pursuit of international accreditations from the EFMD and AACSB.

International accreditations figured as key strategic objectives accompanying the ED's vision and new strategy for GSBS. The ED had engaged with PRME in his previous Institution and was aware of the pressures building on accreditation bodies to integrate ethics, responsibility and sustainability (ERS) in to their standards.   He set target dates for achieving a series of accreditations from 2015 onwards. A team of faculty members, programme leaders of key programmes, were asked to lead on these, requiring them to become (if not already) familiar with the principles of PRME. These faculty were to subsequently become members of what was called the 'PRME Leadership Team' (PLT), made up of several academics from the newly merged School. The remit of the PLT was to lead and coordinate publication

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[5] Please refer to Section 4 for a reminder of the difference between vision and mission.

of GCU's sharing information on progress (SIP) report, and to decide what could be done to support faculty across GSBS and the wider University to make sense of PRME in relation to their programmes, teaching, research, pedagogy and community engagement.

In terms of the Transformational Model discussed earlier (Escudero et al, 2015), this can be seen as the embryo of a "Bottom-Up" approach to implementation of PRME.   The ED not only encouraged, but supported faculty, in their efforts to learn about PRME and share newly acquired knowledge with faculty. Faculty started to network, and *actively* engage with PRME through different fora – starting with the Global Forum in Rio in 2012 (which the University Principal also attended). This was followed by contributions at the PRME Summit in Slovenia in 2013, through to membership of PRME Working Groups on SIP (sharing information on progress) reporting, poverty, and climate change, serving on the steering committee of the newly established PRME regional chapter for the United Kingdom and Ireland, and consequently joining the PRME Champions group, established in 2013[6] "*to work collaboratively to develop and promote activities that address shared barriers to making broad scale implementation of sustainability principles a reality*".

7.1 Amplifying PRME

Space prevents me writing more on the importance and value of this networking to institutionalisation of PRME in GCU – however I should add that at this stage the University (again, not the business school) signed up to two other initiatives that reinforce the University's commitment to work "For the Common Good". The first of these is PRME's parent initiative, the business-led United Nations Global Compact (UNGC)[7]. The second is the largest business-led corporate responsibility network in the United Kingdom, Business in the Community (BITC[8]). GCU membership of BITC speaks to PRME's unwritten '7th' Principle that states "*we understand that our own*

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[6] http://www.unprme.org/working-groups/champions.php
[7] https://www.unglobalcompact.org
[8] http://www.bitc.org.uk

organisational practices should serve as an example of the values and attitudes we convey to our students". By benchmarking itself against BITC corporate members' 'best practice' in the field of responsible business, GCU is not only educating for and researching in areas of responsible management, but is able to demonstrate that it 'walks the talk' of responsible business. As a result the University has been able to assess and benchmark the impact of some of its strategic 'common good' initiatives against those of household names such as IBM, Ford of Britain, EDF Energy, GSK, and Siemens.

In 2014 and 2016, competing with large corporates, GCU won BITC Responsible Business Awards in two different categories: the first was the Unilever International Award, supported by Business fights Poverty[9], for its contribution to achieving three of the United Nations Millenium Development Goals with its work in Bangladesh; and the second was the BITC Education Award[10] for its work to improve access to education for families in areas of multiple deprivation in Glasgow and London.   Such awards have served not only to engage other parts of the University in an important responsible business network, but also provide encouragement and affirmation to staff of the value of their work "For the Common Good".

7.2 Pollinating PRME

As a member of that PRME Leadership Team, later to be given the designation of "Lead for the Common Good" in GSBS, I came to view myself and colleagues as 'pollinators' of PRME within GCU – connecting colleagues with ideas and best practice produced not only by the global PRME community, but also PRME, UNGC and BITC stakeholders, associated sustainability networks, publishers and newspapers. I was interested not only in learning and teaching the content of PRME, but also in 'strategising' about PRME, interpreting it, and making sense of it in relation to the GSBS and the wider GCU context, existing research, teaching and community engagement.

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[9] http://www.gcu.ac.uk/gsbs/news/article/?news_i=92312
[10] http://www.responsiblebusinessawards.org.uk/2016-winners/the-education-award/

We found PRME publications, the PRME website, and networks a rich source of knowledge and ideas, an early example of which was the 1st PRME Inspirational Guide for the Implementation of PRME (2012), which shared over sixty examples of the work of signatories around the world. Indeed, it was this publication, and a paper from Sabanci University in Turkey, which prompted a colleague to propose establishment of a PRME Leadership Team in GCU.

Since then, I have come to consider the sourcing, sharing and dissemination of knowledge and methods for implementing and making sense of PRME a centerpiece of my role as GSBS Lead for the Common Good, and 'Chief Pollinator' of PRME in GCU.   On the other hand, I see this very much as a reciprocal arrangement and GCU contributions to the PRME community equally important, as they represent the values of PRME - knowledge exchange and sharing (as opposed to knowledge transfer), dialogue, partnership and a commitment to the wider community, all part of what we might think of as an action learning and research approach to implementing PRME.   Examples of this are GCU cases published in the 2nd PRME Inspirational Guide (2013), co-editing the Inspirational Guide for PRME for the UK and Ireland (2014), hosting the 2nd UK and Ireland PRME Regional Chapter Annual Conference at GCU, contributing to compilation of the PRME SIP Toolkit[11], and serving as an elected member of the PRME Advisory Committee. All of the above engagement brings with it not only benefits from organisational learning, but can feed directly in to the pursuit and achievement of accreditation objectives, which, as discussed earlier were all part of the ED's vision for GSBS.

7.3 Developing the curriculum

For example, once the vision and strategy were shared, the ED announced a 'refresh' of the postgraduate portfolio, followed by the undergraduate portfolio, led by an Associate Dean. The general idea was to review all programmes in the context of a set of 'design principles', which were put together by a design

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[11]

group, some members of which came from the PRME Leadership Team. For the postgraduate portfolio, the design team stipulated the need for all students to take an inter-disciplinary core module that placed business in the wider societal context – this resulted in the introduction of a Contemporary Issues module.

One of ten principles emerging from extensive debate and discussion in the undergraduate portfolio design team, of which I was part, was alignment with responsible management.   This policy required all module descriptors to include a statement explaining how the module was related to PRME. Given that content related to PRME covers a myriad of topics under the umbrella of economic, social and environmental sustainability, the policy allowed for coverage of a wide range of topics contextualized within a given module (e.g. ethical consumer in marketing; human rights in supply chain management; bottom of the pyramid in international business).

However, perceiving a need for some form of *integrated* treatment of PRME themes, a new core module was introduced across all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes that addressed the broader question of business in society and the wider world. In Rusinko's (2010) typology of options to integrate corporate responsibility in the curriculum this corresponds to a dual strategy of integrating PRME in to existing modules, as well as in a new cross-disciplinary course.

7.4 PRME and international accreditation
By the time of a GSBS application for eligibility for the European Programme Accreditation System (EPAS) in 2014, all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes had been 'refreshed', with a strong PRME footprint, and enhancements in all other areas covered by EPAS standards.   The effort invested in to the 'refresh' exercise placed GSBS in an excellent position to demonstrate alignment of its applicant programmes with the five EPAS accreditation standards of internationalisation; corporate relevance; academic rigour; quality assurance; and ethics, responsibility and sustainability (ERS).

In 2015, GSBS was awarded EPAS accreditation for four programmes for three years, in part due to meeting requirements of the ERS (PRME) standard. However, I would argue that this is not simply a case of what Burchell at al. (2014) would describe as PRME being a means to end. On reflection, I would argue that perhaps the reverse is true, and that pursuit of EPAS accreditation was a fortuitous means to anchor PRME in the consciousness of GSBS faculty. I say this because the 18-month accreditation process brought faculty and staff together around a common goal. Pursuit of accreditation was the catalyst for much soul-searching, questioning, debate and discussion about ERS (PRME) and other standards that otherwise may not have taken place. However, rather than consider whether PRME was a means to the end of EPAS accreditation, or vice versa, what emerges is a need to understand how PRME fits in to the bigger picture of an organisation at any point in time, how business school leaders align it with their objectives, and how they give PRME meaning in the context of the organizational vision, values, and strategy.

7.5 From vision to strategy to policy

Integrating PRME in to learning and teaching policy as illustrated above, at the School or University level, has clear benefits and is a potentially powerful way of weaving a 'PRME golden thread' through the curriculum. Clearly, policy-making is dependent on leadership from senior management to make it happen; and even then the 'top-down' approach needs 'bottom-up' support (Escudero et al, 2015) if the policy is to be effective, both during the consultation and implementation stages.

From 2012-2014, the ED of GSBS held the additional role of GCU Pro Vice Chancellor of Learning and Teaching, coinciding with a review of the University's learning, teaching and assessment strategy. The outcome of that review was publication of a new University "Strategy *for* Learning" (SfL), a central feature of which was a set of ten design principles that were to guide the design of any new programmes or re-approvals. Consequently, '*responsible leadership and professionalism*' became one of ten core design principles of a new University-wide SfL, requiring all programmes in all three

of the University's faculties to ensure integration of this design principle in to designs for new programme approvals and re-approvals.   One of four qualifying criteria for "Responsible Leadership and Professionalism", was "*Programmes underpinned by the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education*", thereby encouraging faculty across the university to engage with aspects of PRME through the lens of responsible leadership and management. It would be disingenuous of me to claim that the other two Schools in GCU attach quite the similar importance to PRME as GSBS because of this. I would argue that this is partly due to the PRME acronym signaling 'management education', and 'academic tribes' (Becher, 1989) interpreting that PRME sits in the domain of Glasgow School *for* Business and Society, and not the School of Engineering and the Built Environment or the School of Health and Life Sciences. These different readings of PRME are representative of the many 'political challenges' faced by internal PRME Champions (Solitander et al,, 2012).

Back now to GSBS. As in all change processes, there is resistance, with some interests beginning to object to aspects of the espoused change, including whether the status quo had to change in this way. This is part of what Berger and Luckmann (1966) call 'negotiated social construction', efforts to reach some sort of consensus. However, resistance that accompanied this process was not directly related to the name of the newly-merged School, nor the aim of making PRME a distinctive feature of the GSBS identity, but more to other issues in the strategic change programme. A major one of these was a proposed shift from trimester-long to yearlong modules; and another one could be framed in terms of post merger integration of faculty from different disciplines and academic cultures, and what Becher (1989) refers to as 'academic tribalism' that can stand in the way of cross-disciplinary working.

The focus of this paper, however, does not allow me to elaborate on this aspect of PRME take-up – that is the subject of another paper. Suffice it to say that to reinforce the message of change, the ED made new appointments to the senior management group (SMG) in his time in office, and initiated the search for new senior faculty appointments that worked in areas of

importance to PRME content, examples being professorial appointments in leadership and labour markets.   In September 2014, the ED relinquished his ED role to focus on his PVC role, and left the University for a new challenge in mid 2015. A new Dean took up her position in January 2015.

7.6 Story epilogue

Two years on, PRME continues to occupy a very important role in GSBS, strongly encouraged and enthusiastically supported both by the new Dean, and the University at large. PRME is given even more meaning in the context of the University leadership's decision to rebrand GCU in 2015 as "The University for the Common Good". This has been accompanied by the recent launch of a Common Good Curriculum, aligned to the University's four values of Responsibility, Integrity, Creativity and Confidence, and connected to a set of "Common Good Attributes". In the future, all new programmes in the entire University, and future re-approval of programmes, are required to demonstrate how the curriculum enables our students to develop these attributes before graduating. Collaboration and knowledge sharing between all three Schools in the University has been facilitated by the appointment of "Leads for the Common Good Curriculum" in all three University schools.

The launch of the Common Good Curriculum for the whole University, coinciding as it does with the first year of the world's journey towards achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs[12]), arguably opens up a new phase in GCU's strategic PRME journey. How? Because the seventeen SDGs cover many themes that align with research, teaching and outreach being carried out in the University's three Schools: Glasgow School *for* Business and Society; the School of Engineering and the Built Environment (SEBE); and the School of Health and Life Sciences.

8. Conclusion

The United Nations PRME initiative can be viewed in the context of a global policy trend to develop education for sustainable development in higher

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[12] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs

educations around the world. While such policies suggest a strong consensus and policy convergence around the world, the degree to which they 'fit' with local circumstances and stakeholders is open to question, as illustrated by the uneven take-up and commitment to PRME in different regions of the world. As indicated earlier, the reception of such ideas is often dependent on contextual factors, on the nature of the 'local spaces' (Alexiadou and Jones, 2001) and processes in play where these ideas enter.

While ESD and PRME can be viewed as 'travelling' policy, take-up is likely to be shaped by local 'embedded' factors, the 'potency' of which is conditioned by the historical and prevailing context. In the case presented here, PRME has entered a University in Scotland at a time of change and apparently 'activated' a set of embedded and contextual factors that have allowed the principles of PRME to penetrate and occupy a discursive space and create shared meanings for university leaders and faculty. What can the PRME community, and potential signatories, learn from the case of Glasgow Caledonian University? How can this case enrich the Transformational Model for Implementation of PRME?

1. This case suggests that *context* plays a very significant role in the way that PRME is understood, received and implemented in a University business school. External factors determined the need for internal changes and restructuring in GCU. Thereby timing and changing circumstances provided the 'trigger' for deep institutional commitment to PRME during a merger of two hitherto independent academic units in the University.

2. *Vision* makes PRME more strategic in the organisational context. The contextual factors of the case provided new leadership with a number of challenges resulting from the merger. The ED displays great vision in this case as he 're-imagined' a different future for the newly merged School, with PRME being a very prominent feature of it.

3. *Leadership* is essential, reflecting a consensus in the literature on the need for top-level commitment. In the case presented here, two leaders were

instrumental to giving PRME 'potency'. The first is the Principal of GCU, who developed a vision of GCU as the "University for the Common Good", and who invited Nobel Laureate and anti-poverty campaigner Professor Muhammad Yunus to become the University's Chancellor, and figurehead, in 2012. This is an example of the power of what Johnson (1990) calls "*organisational symbolism*" and "*strategic intent*". The second is the ED of GSBS, with a seat on the Executive Board, whom the Principal judged to be the right person for the job at that particular time. The ED arrived at a time of great change, and developed a clear vision, mission and strategy for the newly merged School. The ED created a new name that reflected his intentions for GSBS to be known as a University business school that serves both the business community and society at large, and produces graduates that are socially responsible.

3. *Strategic alignment* is critical. PRME is given, and assumes, greater meaning if it can be positioned in the context of the wider institutional strategy (in cases where the business school is part of a University). In this case, PRME is clearly not a 'bolt-on', but one in a University portfolio of strategic partnerships that underpin the University's mission to work "For the Common Good". PRME is amplified by, and amplifies the University's mission, value and strategic objectives, one of which is "*Transforming lives through education*". Commitment at the University level, as opposed to level of the business school reinforces this alignment, and has the added advantage of "future-proofing" commitment.

4. *Strategic Management* is fundamental. To avoid "Bolt-on PRME", leadership needs strategic management skills – astutely aware of the importance of context, process and content of strategy. Alignment of vision, mission, values, policies and objectives are all indicators of strategic management in practice, and they are in evidence in this case. Such an approach is a requirement if PRME is to be institutionalised.

5. *Communication* is instrumental. While intuitively sensible, the Principles for Responsible Management require close reading as it is a comprehensive set

of principles that goes beyond the curriculum. To institutionalise PRME requires leaders to both '*make sense*' of PRME in the organisational context to enable them to craft a vision for how it fits, and to '*give sense*' to those charged with implementation of PRME.

8.1 Further Research

The idea for this paper was prompted by publication in of the Transformational Model for Implementation of PRME (2015), and richly informed by literature on the implementation of PRME. The authors of the TM describe it as a "living" document created for and by the PRME community, which will be updated through periodic reviews every few years. I hope that aspects of these findings are worthy of incorporation in future editions.

In terms of further research, and given the importance of leadership and strategic management in the implementation of PRME presented in this case study, I urge colleagues to investigate these aspects further by developing more case studies on how 'local spaces' are receiving the Principles for Management Education. One avenue to explore is how commitment to, and institutionalisation of PRME, are affected by changes in senior management (e.g. change of Dean). A second avenue is how changing institutional strategies and priorities affect and shape institutionalisation of PRME. Lastly, the start of our journey towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is perhaps an opportune time to examine what steps business school leaders are taking to integrate this agenda in to their PRME strategies.

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