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Principles for Responsible Management Education: A practice-based case study of the University of Winchester

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Abstract

Since its first launch in 2007, PRME (Principles of Responsible Management Education) has transformed business and management education through research and leadership. Business and management schools, as well as other management-related higher education institutions, play a key role in shaping the mindsets and skills of future leaders and can be powerful drivers of corporate sustainability.

At present, universities and educators still face the challenge of finding the most appropriate method of embedding sustainability into the management curriculum and to do so in a way that aligns with the practices of their corporate stakeholders. Despite an increasing level of attention and effort to explore the subject, higher education institutions have resisted or struggled to embrace and advance PRME throughout their system.

Practices being reported by PRME Champions Group, a specific group of schools committed to spearheading transformational change toward more socially, and environmentally responsible leadership, are a very good example for those who wish to join the PRME global movement.

This paper is a practice-based case study of how the University of Winchester, a PRME Champion, has successfully embedded the principles of PRME and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into everything they do.

Keywords – PRME; SDGs; Business Schools.

Paper type – Case study

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1 Theoretical Framework

1.1 PRME – Principles of Responsible Management Education

PRME (Principles of Responsible Management Education) was created and launched in 2007 at the UN Global Compact Leaders Summit in Switzerland, with the purpose to “develop the capabilities of students to be generators of sustainable value for a more inclusive global economy” (Parkes et al., 2017; Séraphin et al., 2020). It was inspired by internationally accepted human rights, labor rights, environmental, and integrity values and grounded in the sustainable development, peace, and justice initiatives of the UNGC and the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As stated by Basso et al. (2017, p. 2), “today the mission of a University can hardly be reduced to simply teaching and research. A University should contribute to building a new and improved society, and as such, it must be a visionary center of sustainability, innovation, and excellence, disseminating values and the well-being of society”.

Based on the belief that traditional educational approaches have failed to prepare graduates to respond to the demands of more responsible leadership and prevail over sustainable challenges, the PRME ambition has been to engage management-related academic institutions in the incorporation of responsible leadership principles and sustainability values into school activities and teaching (Assumpção & Neto, 2020).

Business schools have been identified as the best place to implement PRME as they are training the next generation of business leaders (Séraphin et al., 2020; Annan-Diab & Molinari, 2017).

Business education is the key to creating responsible managers. As described by Haertle et al. (2017, p. 67), the academic sector can play a strategic role as change agents, educating the managers of today and tomorrow, incorporating the values of responsible corporate citizenship into their education activities:

1. The development of: *a)* new teaching materials; *b)* case studies; *c)* technical tools; *d)* capacities; and *e)* skills for future responsible leaders is crucial for both the long-term mainstreaming of global corporate citizenship in business, as well as for the advancement of responsible business education.
2. The academic sector can train professionals to act as generators of sustainable value both for business and society, willing to endeavor for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.
3. The sector could strive to embed curricula and educational disciplines in universal values of global corporate citizenship: from marketing to financial analysis, from operations to business strategies, from accounting to international analysis, or from microeconomics to legal studies (Escudero, 2006).

To achieve the PRME objectives, business schools and other providers have to review their curriculum design, pedagogy, research agenda; change their practices; and built partnerships with all stakeholders involved in sustainability (Parkes et al., 2017). Principle 3 of PRME summarises the method used: “Create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership” (Haertle et al., 2017, p. 71).

Today, PRME is a growing and dynamic movement of academic institutions and management programs committed to promoting and integrating socially responsible principles and practices (Haertle et al., 2017; Godemann et al., 2014). There are over 850 PRME registered signatory Business schools, a 30 percent increase from its launch in 2007¹. PRME serves as a platform to share and discuss inspirational activities and best practices on how to mainstream sustainability and responsible leadership into Management Education (ME) globally and promote the development of responsible leaders. PRME recognizes that Business schools are connected to numerous organizations interacting, competing, and collaborating in a larger ecosystem (Abdelgaffar, 2021).

Signatory Business schools are expected to: *a)* provide a knowledge sharing platform for learning and support on ethics, responsibility, and sustainability (ERS) projects, initiatives, and events; *b)* embed ERS in Business school education and practices; *c)* collaborate with relevant stakeholders on addressing and solving wicked problems and SDGs; *d)* incorporate ERS issues in research and education and develop supportive tools, methods, and resources; and *e)* address, contextualize, and connect local and global challenges with PRME Chapters and Regional Meetings².

In order to share information and progress on the initiatives, a PRME Business School presents a Sharing Information Progress (SIP) every 24 months. A PRME Integration Framework (PIF) is used to map, categorize, and compare a multitude of Responsible Management Education (RME) integration components corresponding to six principles of PRME. Each component is supported with scholarly work to validate using PIF as a metrics to monitor progress towards a consistent level of RME integration and enhance the quality of future SIPs. The Framework offers a practical guide for business schools on their transformational journey to RME adoption³.

¹ www.unprme.org/signatory-model

² www.unprme.org/signatory-model

³ <https://www.unprme.org/reporting-sharing-information-on-progress>

1.2 The six principles of PRME

The PRME is a principle-based framework structured on six principles – purpose, values, method, research, partnership, and dialogue – proposing a formal commitment by the school to embrace a responsible education system for Sustainable Development, and to share the progress of the school with the PRME Community through a Sharing Information Process (SIP) every 2 years. The community adherence progress shows the increasing interest of business schools to embrace the journey and the evidence is that the principles have been a successful initiative and encouragement mechanism based on consistent progress shared by signatories over time (Godemann et al., 2011).

The main objective of PRME is to embed its values into the core activities of signatory institutions, guided by its six operating principles⁴:

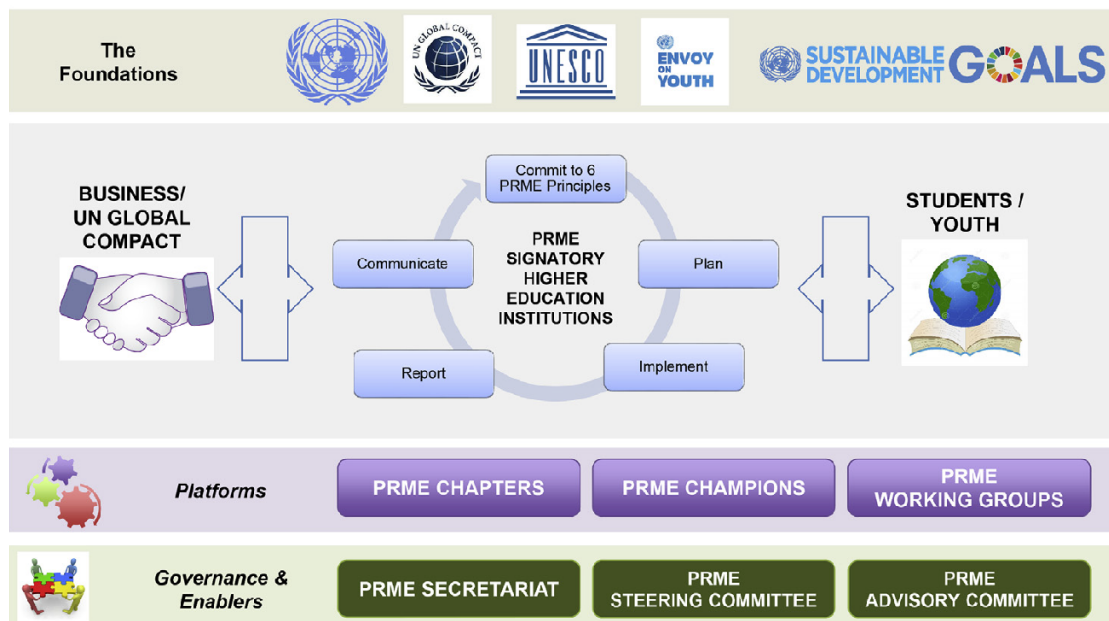
- Purpose: We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy;
- Values: We will incorporate into our academic activities, curricula, and organisational practices the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact;
- Method: We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership;
- Research: We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value;
- Partnership: We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges;
- Dialogue: We will facilitate and support dialogue and debate among educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability.

⁴ <https://www.unprme.org/what-we-do>

PRME was seen by the pioneer schools and engaged faculty as the ideal opportunity to challenge colleagues and senior faculty to take a fresh look at how curriculum development is, so often, a term used for rearranging subjects and topics that remain largely unchanged for years. PRME's six Principles provide the opportunity for an examination into the curriculum, but also into research topics, the manner in which schools engage with wider society, and to engage with the private sector.

Assumpção and Neto (2020, p. 8) in their research have found some high frequency initiatives encountered across signatory schools. These initiatives are mostly related to: 1) programs and projects involving reduction of the environmental impacts of schools as well as leveraging the social well-being conditions eventually represented by specific certifications; 2) hosting or promoting conferences, forums, workshops and other events that promote dialogue and the exchange of knowledge on social and environmental responsible leadership; 3) the participation of school members in boards, groups and associations, actively participating in conferences and meetings in order to influence systems and agendas to move change forward; and 4) programs of consulting services, volunteer services, and internships with businesses, governments, and other organisations.

Figure 1 - PRME Engagement Model



Source: Heartle et al. (2017)

PRME has also been identified as a tool to achieve SDGs by the 2015 Global Forum for Responsible Management Education, with the long-term objective of achieving a more sustainable world (Annan-Diab & Molinari, 2017). A sustainable University is not only a Green University. It means to have a holistic approach combining environmental indicators such as waste management, energy consumption and carbon policy, with social sustainability indicators assessing the attempts to overcome social discriminations, to favor gender balance, to implement good practices in labor and good employer practices, as well as to stimulate student involvement in the campus and university life (Basso et al., 2017).

2 PRME at the University of Winchester

2.1 Winchester, the University for Sustainability and Social Justice

The University of Winchester is in Winchester, in southern England, one of the most beautiful cities in the UK. It is the ancient capital of England, chosen by King Alfred the Great as the seat of power for his Kingdom of Wessex. Winchester is also the resting place of author Jane Austen, who is buried in Winchester Cathedral. The roots of the University of Winchester are in 1840 when the Winchester Diocesan Training School was founded as a Church of England foundation. Since then, there has been sustained development, leading to it becoming King Alfred's College in 1928. In 2005 it was awarded the title of The University of Winchester⁵. Winchester's origins and development have led to a human-centred purpose: "To be a world-leading values driven university". Winchester's mission is: "To educate, to advance knowledge and to serve the common good" and its values are intellectual freedom, social justice, diversity, spirituality, individuals matter and creativity (Neale et al., 2018, p. 172).

Winchester is a small and relatively new university with a regional and ethical history, operating in an increasingly international environment. In 1840 there were just ten pupils. Today there are close to 8,000 students, of which about 6% are international students and 67% are female⁶.

The University is a beautiful award-winning campus which is a hub of knowledge, creativity and innovation for the city and beyond. It is the University for "Sustainability and Social Justice". The core values of Compassion, Individuals Matter and Spirituality shape the University's mission to educate, to

⁵ <https://www.winchester.ac.uk/about-us/our-history/>

⁶ <https://www.winchester.ac.uk/about-us/our-future/the-university-in-numbers/>

advance knowledge and to serve the common good: “we believe academic freedom leads to big ideas which in turn lead to social justice and creativity for a better world”⁷.

In November 2019, Winchester launched its Strategic Vision 2030, setting out how it plans to continue to grow and flourish as an institution and make a difference. Strategic Vision 2030 – aligned with the United Nations’ Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals – was the culmination of 18-months of work with staff, students, governors and other stakeholders. At its core sits a bold vision and clear mission, from which flows the University’s strategic goals and framework. “All of it is shaped, informed and inspired by our values and commitment to educational excellence, sustainability and social justice” (Sharing Information on Progress [SIP], 2021, p. 23).

Strategic Vision 2030 sets out how Winchester will deliver transformative education, research and innovation, support people to flourish, and champion organisational excellence. It is the roadmap outlining how this institution will strive to have an impact, be the difference and make the world better.

The Business School is part of the University of Winchester. Winchester Business School was established around the time that PRME was launched and is proud to have been amongst the early signatories to the Principles in 2007-2008. Thus, from the formation of the Business School, PRME has played a central role in informing the University’s strategies relating to teaching, research and external engagement.

Winchester is also a member of the UN Global Compact UK Network and the UK-based Business in the Community. In 2012, Winchester Business School established The Centre for Responsible Management, which aims to bring together the private, public and civil society sectors, in order to develop a community of practice, dedicated to the creation of a more equitable and sustainable economy and society through the following activities: developing responsible leaders, conducting practical research, building a responsible management community. 2017 saw the launch of the Centre for Climate Change Education and Communication that builds on the University’s strategy to embed climate change education for all students, regardless of discipline, by 2021 (SIP, 2019).

The fact that the PRME Principles align so closely to the values and mission of the University makes the commitment to PRME a central part of the vision of the Business School and helps to shape the University’s future in being part of the continuing development of PRME.

For illustration, the engagement of the University of Winchester with SDGs is articulated mostly around principle 5 of PRME (Partnership), and principle 6 (Dialogue), which translates practically into:

⁷ <https://www.winchester.ac.uk/about-us/our-values/>

daily talks on green campus initiatives and green travel options for staff and students induction in September welcome week; reward for staff for being green in the workplace as well as taking part in fitness and wellbeing activities on and off campus; Go Green Week, which is a programme including activities such as fruit tree planting; clothes swap; etc. (SIP, 2019; Séraphin et al., 2020).

2.2 PRME Champion School: initiatives and challenges

In January 2016, Winchester became a PRME Champion School. The PRME Champions are a select group of experienced and engaged PRME signatories that are committed to working collaboratively to develop and promote activities and resources that address shared barriers to making responsible management education a reality. The PRME Champions group is globally and proportionally representative according to the makeup of the larger PRME community (i.e. balance of regions and type of academic institution). The mission of the PRME Champions group is to contribute to thought and action leadership on responsible management education in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In so doing, PRME Champions commit to working collaboratively, serving the broader PRME community through active engagement in other PRME networks, and contributing to broader UN goals and issues, in particular the SDGs⁸.

The last Sharing Information on Progress (SIP, 2021)⁹ presents in detail the University's engagement in Responsible Management and the 17 SDGs. Winchester is continuing embedding the six PRME principles in a growing number of initiatives:

- Under the principle of “Purpose”, it could be said that Winchester has emphasised the connection of its mission, values and visions with social and environmental concepts, and also with the development of students with the character of global citizens. PRME is the framing for the University's programmes and research agenda, and it embraces many aspects of “responsible management”, including poverty, food, green spaces, climate change education, ethics, responsible leadership, sustainability and social responsibility. The Principle has also influenced and helped shape the University-wide strategy and agenda with regard to sustainability with the Business School playing a leading role in the “Responsible Futures” initiative. Responsible Futures is a collaborative change management programme with the National Union of Students

⁸ <https://www.unprme.org/prme-champions>

⁹ https://issuu.com/theuniversityofwinchester/docs/prme_report_2020-2021?fr=sZDgwNTM0NDcxOTk

(NUS) Sustainability Charity – Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS) that aims to embed the SDGs in both the formal and informal curriculum as well as the subliminal curriculum.

- Exploring initiatives under the principle of “Value”, Winchester has disseminated guidelines and principles related to SD issues, promoting a values-based culture across its community. The University has integrated SDGs into guidelines and principles, supporting the 2030 Agenda. It has also applied assessment tools to measure a new set of expected learning outcomes, aligned with new learning subjects and learning experiences. In accordance with the University’s core values is the establishment of a Sustainability and Social Justice Committee that reports directly to the University Senior Management Team and has representation across all disciplines (and key stakeholders).
- Under the principle of “Method”, considering initiatives involving curriculum innovation and redesign, there are many methods being approached by the University of Winchester Business School to change curricula, among the others: 1) the decision to include the UN SDGs in the learning outcomes of every programme delivered across the University from 2019-2020 – to ensure that all students, regardless of discipline, have education for sustainable development before they graduate (see figure 2); 2) the validation of a new Master in Sustainability and Social Justice and an Executive MBA that aligns organisational leadership with the UN SDGs; 3) the introduction of Carbon Literacy Training – short online courses that aim to enable academics, students and others to be actively involved in embedding climate solutions in their own life and work; 4) the short Course on Climate Change – the course was introduced in 2016-2017 online and provides a range of resources to help to understand the causes, impacts, politics and actions needed at local, regional, and international levels.
- For the “Research” principle, the University has established study centres related to Sustainability or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) issues, to focus on influencing and generating research projects. Some of the examples are: The Centre for Responsible Management (HOARE), the Institute for Value Studies, the Centre for Information Rights, the Centre for Religion, Reconciliation and Peace, and the Centre for Animal Welfare. Also, a vast number of publications, presentations and projects on these topics have been implemented, and there are a growing number of doctoral research students undertaking PhDs in relation to PRME and the SDGs.
- Under the “Partnership” principle, besides the initiatives related to consultancy programs and volunteer services, internships, or those related to the active participation of the University in

boards and associations, Winchester is part of the “Virtual Cultural Exchange Programme” delivered in partnership with Amity University Business School, India. The programme is designed to offer meaningful opportunities for students from both universities to enhance their international knowledge around SDGs in action both in the UK and India, as well as developing inter-cultural understanding.

- Under the principle of “Dialogue”, there is an effort of hosting and promoting conferences, forums and workshops, as well as incentives for the development of student communities that promote dialogue and activities on topics and projects related to social and environmental issues. For example, Winchester has worked closely with the UN Global Compact (UNGC) UK Network (as a member and both Chairing and hosting the UK & Ireland PRME Chapter) and previously organised a Sustainable Development Goals Road-show (Making Global Goals Local Business) in partnership with UNGC. This was attended by over 50 local and national businesses as well as local authority representatives. Also, the University supports and works collaboratively with other organisations such as the Winchester Action on Climate Change (WinACC), or the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), underlining its commitment to tackling the significant global challenges the world now faces, including climate change (SIP, 2019; 2021).

In terms of environmental effort to become a green campus, in June 2019, the University announced its pledge to eliminate all unnecessary single-use plastic by December 2020 and called on individuals and the higher education sector to stand up and take action to combat the climate crisis¹⁰.

With this in mind, the University has continued to purchase green electricity and extended this to purchase 46% green in 2019-2020 moving to 100% green gas in 2020-2021. Green gas is renewable biomethane gas produced close to the University and significantly reduces our Scope 2 emissions. The transition of site vehicles to electric has progressed apace (SIP, 2021, p. 21).

Another important initiative, which has won three national awards, featured on the BBC and been selected as one of the UK’s 100 best breakthroughs in the MadeAtUni campaign¹¹, is the “reducing coffee cup”. Since November 2016, the University has been working to reduce its disposable coffee cup use by implementing a 25p surcharge on all hot and cold drinks sold in disposable cups in its café outlets, and giving away reusable cups to all staff and students. In two years, this has saved over 72,000 disposable cups from being used on campus. An average of 33 drinks in 100 are now served in a reusable cup, up from just 3 in 100 in 2015-2016. Also, the reusable cups are Gum-tec Americano mugs

¹⁰ <https://www.winchester.ac.uk/about-us/sustainability-and-social-justice/green-campus/>

¹¹ <https://madeatuni.org.uk/university-winchester>

– made of 20% chewing gum (around 42 pieces per cup). The chewing gum is collected on campus and sent to be recycled into the Gum-tec mugs¹².

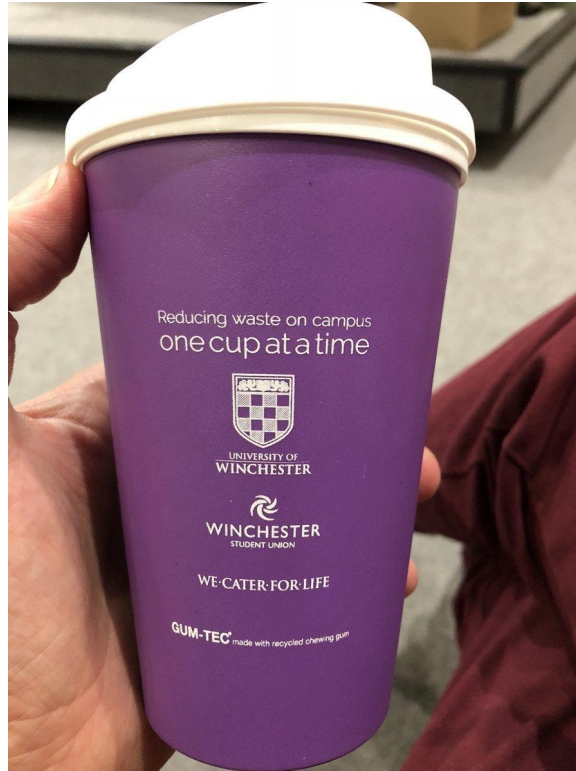
Figure 2 - The table shows a selection of where “responsible management” modules are included in the undergraduate programmes and whether they are core (C) or optional (O)

COURSES	Responsible Management	Sustainability in Business	Globalisation and Diversity	Sustainable Strategy in Action	Business Ethics	Marketing Ethics	Corporate Governance	Business Ethics, and Law	Sustainable Economics	Responsible Event Management	Fashion Supply Chain Management	Fashion & Sustainable Development Goals	Volunteering	Values Based Studies	Human Rights Law	Equity Law	Company & Corporate Governance	Environment Law and Policy
BA (Hons) Business Management	C	C	C	C	C	O			O				O	O				
BSc (Hons) Marketing						C							O	O				O
BA (Hons) Event Management					O					C			O	O				
BA / MACC (Hons) Accounting and Finance							O	C					O	O			C	O
BSc (Hons) Economics													O	O				
BA (Hons) Fashion: Marketing											C		O	O				
LLB Law															O	O	O	O
BA (Hons) Fashion Business							C					O	O					

Source: SIP (2021)

¹² <https://www.winchester.ac.uk/about-us/sustainability-and-social-justice/green-campus/>

Figure 3 - The University of Winchester reusable cup



Source: University of Winchester website (www.winchester.ac.uk)

3 Conclusions

The UN Principles for Responsible Management Education initiative is an important catalyst for the transformation of management education and a global initiative to change and reform management education in order to meet the increasing societal demands for responsible business. The mission of PRME is to inspire and foster responsible management education, research and thought leadership for long-term oriented, socially responsible business. It aims to support management education institutions adapt their curricula, research, teaching methodologies and institutional strategies in order to develop a generation of responsible business leaders and enhance research on PRME related issues. Since its launch in 2007, PRME has grown as a network serving as a platform for exchanging ideas and enabling learning among the signatories (over 850). Among them there is the University of Winchester Business School in the UK, which is also part of the PRME Champions group.

This paper highlights some key aspects related to the implementation of PRME in business and management education. It also offers a view of the kind of initiatives undertaken by the University of Winchester Business School, which has been amongst the early signatories to the Principles in 2007-2008. The Winchester Business School has worked to integrate the Principles into all areas of the School's plans and activities. This includes the areas identified in the Principles, i.e. curricula, programme design, courses and learning, research as well as partnerships and dialogue with all the stakeholders. PRME at Winchester covers all aspects of the University life, representing a very good example for those universities and educators willing to join the PRME initiative.

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