

Implementing the *Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)* – The Questions We Have Not Asked (Yet)

All-Academy Professional Development Workshop (PDW) at the
2008 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management in Anaheim, CA

Saturday, 9 August, 1:00 – 3:30 pm Anaheim Convention Center

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Principles for
Responsible
Management Education | **PRME**

Abstract

Supported by the United Nations Global Compact, the *Principles for Responsible Management Education* (PRME) provide a framework for academic institutions to advance corporate responsibility through the incorporation of universal values into curricula and research. The PRME have been developed by an international task force consisting of 60 deans, university presidents and official representatives of leading business schools. Officially launched at the 2007 Global Compact Leaders Summit in Geneva, the PRME are now in the *implementation phase*.

This All-Academy PDW will bring together a variety of people from different institutions who have adopted or are considering adopting the PRME, and from a range of disciplinary backgrounds. The objectives of the workshop are twofold. First, the aim is to identify and share the questions that have emerged in the early phases of adopting and beginning to implement the PRME, as well as those answers concerning PRME implementation we already have. Early adopters will be invited to present their experiences and best practices; sharing these experience with others who have just adopted or are considering adopting PRME, facilitating a sharing of experiences and best practices regarding responsible management education. In addition, the PDW will provide a forum for jointly developing innovative solutions to implementing the PRME. Second, considering that every answer is only as good as the questions we ask, the PDW also wants participants to discuss what questions are *meaningful* when implementing the PRME and which of these questions have not been asked yet.

As the PRME concern teaching and research in *all* management-related disciplines and are *not* limited to the area of business ethics or corporate (social) responsibility, this PDW aims to bring together scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds and nationalities to explore the cross-disciplinary and international nature of responsible management education. This PDW is necessary and timely since a number of academic institutions have already signed up or are considering signing up to the PRME and thus face the crucial question of implementation.

Overview of the Proposed All-Academy PDW on PRME

Context and Motivation – The Questions We Have Not Asked (Yet)

Supported by the United Nations Global Compact (www.unglobalcompact.org), the *Principles for Responsible Management Education* (PRME) provide a framework for academic institutions to advance corporate social responsibility through the incorporation of universal values into curricula and research. An international task force consisting of 60 deans, university presidents and official representatives of leading business schools developed the PRME in collaboration with the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the Aspen Institute's Business and Society Program, the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI), and NetImpact. The PRME were officially launched at the 2007 Global Compact Leaders Summit in Geneva and already gained a lot of media attention (The Times 2007; Financial Times 2007; Economist.com 2007). In his closing remarks at the summit, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon especially acknowledged the principles by arguing that: "The Principles for Responsible Management Education have the capacity to take the case for universal values and business into classrooms on every continent" (United Nations 2007).

Created by a global task force of academics in management and related disciplines and institutions, PRME represent a set of voluntary standards to which management schools and programs agree to adhere in the interest of developing future leaders with the necessary insights, skills, and competencies to deal with the issues that businesses and other institutions are facing in the 21st century. The six principles focus on 1) the *purpose* of creating sustainable value and an inclusive, sustainable global economy; 2) *values* of responsibility as illustrated by initiatives like the UN Global Compact's ten principles around human rights, labor rights, ecological sustainability, and anti-corruption; 3) *method* of creating pedagogies and education approaches that develop effective and responsible leaders; 4) *research* that advances understanding about the impacts of companies in creating sustainable social, environmental, and economic value; 5) *partnership* that fosters interactions between managers and academics to explore challenges in meeting environmental and social responsibilities; and 6) *dialogue* that facilitates debate among representatives of the multiple sectors that constitute society around key social and sustainability issues (see Figure 1).

Principle 1	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.
Principle 2	We will incorporate into our academic activities and curricula the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.
Principle 3	We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.
Principle 4	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.
Principle 5	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 towards meeting these challenges.
Principle 6	We will facilitate and support dialogue and debate among educators, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organizations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global responsibility and sustainability.

Figure 1: The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)

In setting forth PRME, the Task Force also issued a ‘call to action’ to business and management programs and schools to participate actively in implementing the principles, a call that has been supported by the major sponsors of the program. In September 2007 an initial PRME Steering Committee comprised of AACSB International, EFMD, the Aspen Institute’s Business and Society Program, EABIS, GMAC, GRLI, and NetImpact, was formally established. The UN Global Compact Office was asked to serve as the initiative’s secretariat.

Further, each of these organizations is working within its own membership to establish links to the implementation of PRME in management education. For example, international accrediting body AACSB’s board unanimously endorsed the PRME as a compliment to and continuous improvement framework for management education in September 2007, and has committed to promoting the PRME among its member institutions. Similarly, EABIS (the European Academy of Business in Society) formally endorsed PRME at its September 2007 meeting.

The overall theme of the 2008 AOM Meeting in Anaheim – ‘The Questions We Ask’ – fits particularly well with the current status of the PRME. Launched in 2007, the PRME is an emerging initiative that can develop only if we *ask – and answer – the right questions* concerning implementation. The broad and universal nature of the prin-

ciples leaves a lot of room for creative solutions for individual institutions. Such solutions, however, can materialize only if we start asking meaningful questions about implementation. Without implementation the developed principles remain nothing more than nice words. Hence, implementation is the catchword!

The proposed All-Academy PDW addresses the implementation issue. In particular, the PDW has two major objectives. The workshop aims at bringing together a variety of people from different managerial disciplines, institutional and educational backgrounds, and nationalities:

- (1) To share and discuss initial implementation steps, cases and best practices that PRME signatories, but also non-signatories, already have developed, and
- (2) To jointly identify those questions that need to be asked to create future tools that support any of the six PRME principles.

Workshop Format & Content

The proposed PDW consists of two brief presentations as well as interactive roundtable discussions and is scheduled for two and a half hours. To ensure a common level of knowledge about the PRME among participants, the PDW starts with presentation (around 20 minutes), followed by a short dialogue session (around 10 minutes).

Introductory Remarks

- *Carolyn Woo* (University of Notre Dam) will start with a keynote speech about how the Global Compact affects corporations and which implications this has for the future of the PRME.
- *Ángel Cabrera* (Chairman of the PRME Task Force and President of Thunderbird) and *Manuel Escudero* (United Nations Global Compact Office, Head of the Academic Unit of the Global Compact) will provide a brief overview of the six PRME principles as well as the context and process of their development. They will also share insights gleaned from signatories about the challenges of implementation and the need to ask the right questions. In addition, they will identify those questions that have been asked with regard to the six principles so far and thus set the stage for the roundtable discussions later on.

Roundtable Discussions

The main part of the PDW will consist of several roundtables (exact number depends on the final number of participants), which will provide a forum where participants can discuss their experiences, challenges, and attitudes toward PRME, raise key questions that have arisen in the adoption and implementation processes, and exchange ideas and case stories and identify remaining issues and questions. Guided by one of the organizers or first speakers, and led by a representative from an adopting institution, workshop participants will be asked to assign a ‘reporter’ to provide a summary of the dialogue to the plenary group. Several key *questions* will guide the conversation:

- (1) What have been the challenges in the PRME adoption process? What were the experiences of adopting schools in enlisting a champion to forward the PRME, in gaining the support of administration to become a signatory, and in enlisting faculty participation?
- (2) To what extent is PRME implementable at all? Is it rhetoric or reality in your institutions? What are the challenges of implementing PRME?
- (3) What are the benefits of implementing PRME?
- (4) What specific examples and case stories can you share about tools, mechanisms, lectures, research events, dialogues, and partnerships that support any of the six PRME principles?
- (5) What questions need to be asked (but were not asked yet) to help more academic institutions endorse the PRME?
- (6) What do you see as the long-term implications of adopting or not adopting PRME, especially in light of the AACSB and EFMD’s endorsement of the principles?

The questions aim at an exchange of existing knowledge, and attempt to uncover those issues and problems that are related to the six principles, which have not been discussed yet. Since we expect that an All-Academy PDW will attract scholars from a variety of institutions, disciplines and national backgrounds, the discussions will expose questions that have not been asked so far and thus account for differences under which academic organizations are operating (e.g., political, cultural, economical). Organizationally, each roundtable discussion will last around 60 minutes and will be moderated by a discussant familiar with the PRME. The organizers will ensure that there will be an

equal distribution of people among the roundtables according to the following criteria: signatories/non-signatories, international/US, ethics background/no ethics background.

Closing Remarks / Action Plan

The organizers together with the ‘roundtable reporters’ will review and compare the results of the roundtables to create a list of best practices that were shared and questions that were identified. The PDW is closed with some very brief closing remarks by one of the organizers (see Figure 2 for an overview of the entire PDW).

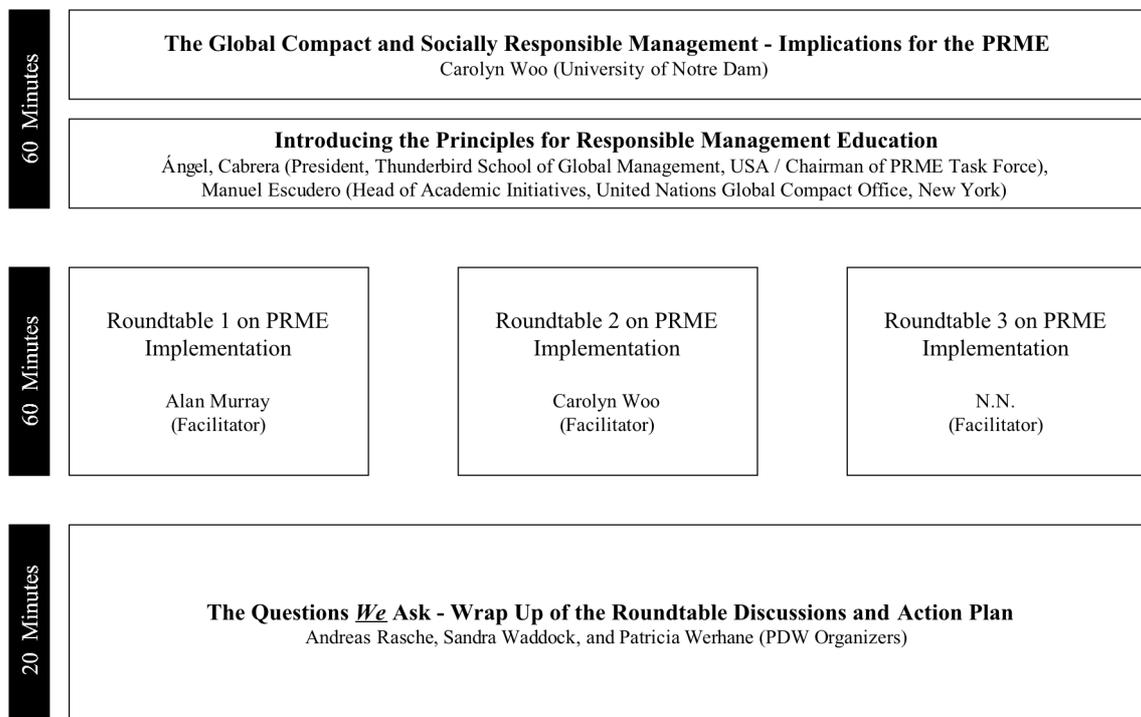


Figure 2: Overview of the PDW

Deliverables

The outcomes of the discussions are presented to all participants at the end of the PDW. Furthermore, the key points will be integrated into an ‘Outcome Document’ which will be presented at the *Global Forum on Responsible Management Education* at the United Nations in New York in late 2008 or early 2009. In addition, the ‘Outcome Document’ is emailed to all participants in due course.

Conclusion

Any meaningful and lasting change in the conduct of corporations toward societal responsibility and sustainability must involve the institutions that most directly act as drivers of business behavior, especially academia. Academic institutions help shape the attitude and behavior of business leaders through business education, research, management development programs, training, and other pervasive, but less tangible, activities, such as the spread and advocacy of new values and ideas. Due to their universal character, the deliberative process of their development and the high-level support of many institutions, including the United Nations, the PRME offer a unique chance to take responsible management education seriously by integrating it into the many disciplines that management education and research consists of. Implementation, of course, remains the crucial challenge for the initiative and asking the right questions about how to put the six principles into practice may be an important driver of its future success.

References

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