Chapter 11
Weaving a Comprehensive Cloth for a Sustainable Business Education:
Knitting Ethical Criteria for Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to share a process to compose a mission for a business program, conceiving it as an aspirational quest, where mindful and critical methods are invoked. By proposing a set of sensitizing questions, organized in a comprehensive matrix, the author argues about the importance of discovering insights, promoting critiques and formulating transformative intentions in business education. After adopting a set of comprehensive goals, some logics of change are explored, and ulteriorly, a mission statement in presented.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the elaborated quest of a pioneer business program, embedded in business school that was installed in Colombia (South-America), as part of the American Alliance for Progress' efforts to multiply beacons of capitalism and democracy during the 1960's, within the context of Cold War. This setting propitiated in 1960 the creation of EAFIT University; the first business school in Colombia, with the support of Syracuse University from the USA. Thus, by offering the first undergrad bachelor program in Business Management, gave force to business as a legitimate activity to pursue grow and well-being.

After almost six decades of existence, willfully trying to contribute to local society, EAFIT is now willing to expand its outreach, attempting to generate positive impacts in the whole country of Colombia, and the Latin American region. By interpreting the contemporary challenges, as more than business opportunities, but as an ethical duty and a matter of corporate citizenship, EAFIT University, wishes to continuously improve its mission, thus expressing its willingness to contribute to the betterment of society.

At the Business Management program, the call is genuinely invigorating. The team that directs the program tries to articulate and synergistically channel all stakeholders, enacting dialogues that nurture continuous updates of the mission, in such a way that they might drive responsible business education. Promoting principles, process and dialogue in settings where students' dreams might come true, and where their families' hopes for better conditions of life become materialized. Through the advancement of quality business education, the whole of society gains, for example small firms' thirst for talents, and entrepreneurs' eagerness to developed business competences, and firms and companies, get infused with talented people, interested in generating sustainable value.

Within this context in mind, and having witnessed many social problems, economic needs and opportunities; but being propelled by aspirational forces (as expressed by the EAFIT's motto: "to Inspire, to Create, to Transform"; this chapter shares a quest (and its provisional outcome) to conceive a meaningful mission for a business management program. It intends to galvanize business as a force for societal multi-dimensional development, while sowing seeds of critical thinking, and integrity.

BACKGROUND

This chapter weaves a mission proposal for a business school, teleologically oriented towards protecting the dignity of the widest possible spectrum of interested parties, but also mindful of the process to be implemented, which attempts to be inclusive and reflexive.

By recalling a basic definition of a mission, as "a preestablished and often self-imposed objective or purpose", (such as given by the Merriam – Webster dictionary); the chapter wishes to evoke the importance of going back to basics, and of exploring the potential of business and business education to constantly be a transformative force for society.

In the particular setting of an emerging country, that continuously faces multiple socio-economic problems, environmental threats, and unsatisfied developmental needs of its population, business could be either an inhibitor or an enhancer of institutional coherence, and multi-dimensional development.

The author believes that the process of composing a mission for a business school would benefit by questioning conventional beliefs and examining taken for granted premises about business. Such a reflexive and inquisitive approach would be, by definition, philosophical, i.e. friendly of, and seeker of wisdom. Such a wisdom can be sought-after, by both, individual introspection and inter-subjective dialogue. Therefore, the chapter proposes to trigger reflection by asking some very basic questions, and empathically, trying to incorporate with equanimity the perspectives of all parties concerned with business education.

Exploring a possible venue to conceive a mission (before espousing specific values), the chapter proposes a set of questions, just to trigger the conversation. These questions do not pretend to be exhaustive, nor do they depict canonical intentions; they just wish to articulate discussions around some related topics, making room for all sorts of legitimate concerns.

When facing the challenge to compose a Mission for Business Education, a good set of starting questions could be about the transcendent challenges of business, and the correlated extraordinary challenges that education must assume.

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