

Chapter 30

Mainstreaming Corporate Social Responsibility at the Core of the Business School Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This book chapter will make the case that corporate social responsibility (CSR) mainstreaming is an imperative to promote integrity and alleviate the strong entrenchment of utilitarian perspectives permeating management education (Ghoshal, 2005). The chapter argues that CSR mainstreaming should be anchored in the context of a vision for responsibility at the level of the School and that, starting with visioning and strategizing, business schools have to assume a more proactive role in shaping a new generation of leaders, capable of managing the complex challenges that lie at the interface of business and society. The chapter highlights challenges and opportunities in this respect and the critical role of the UN Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) in helping in this reorientation. The book chapter tackles these two interrelated themes systematically, and illustrate with the case of the Olayan School of Business, a leading business school in the Middle East.

INTRODUCTION

The corporate scandals of the 1990s and the financial crisis at the end of the last decade have been shocking to business observers and triggered much debate and introspection. At the heart of

these debates are questions pertaining to the root causes of these failures and as importantly, the role of business schools as agents of change in the context of management education and business practice (Machold and Huse, 2010). Given the complex and multi-faceted nature of business

decisions, and their increasingly visible implications for society, there has been mounting pressure on business schools to redefine their role and to design programs and curricula addressing the issue of social responsibility (Anderson, 2004; Schwartz *et al.*, 1991). Have business schools done what they can to avoid the current economic setbacks and the crisis in confidence in business education? Have they been diligent in promoting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mainstreaming and alleviating the strong entrenchment of utilitarian perspectives or economic paradigms permeating management education (Ghoshal, 2005)? This book chapter will ponder these questions more systematically, making the case that CSR mainstreaming is an imperative in the context of best practice in management education for integrity and that it should be anchored in the context of a vision for responsibility at the level of the business school.

We start by highlighting the importance of integrating CSR into the mainstream of business schools' curricula or in other words making the case for CSR mainstreaming and integration. Business schools have been accused in recent years of not doing enough to overhaul their conventional curricula that emphasize shareholder value and the reckless pursuit of short-term profits (Machold and Huse, 2010). They have been accordingly blamed in recent years for preparing a generation of business managers that are overly competitive and self interested. In other words, by failing to integrate reflections on ethical values in the curriculum (Holland, 2009; Jacobs, 2009), business schools have failed to sensitize future managers to the moral dimensions of business activities (Rasche and Escudero, 2009; Pies, Beckmann and Hielscher, 2010). The global financial crisis may thus constitute an opportunity for business schools to reposition CSR at the heart of the curriculum (Rasche and Escudero, 2009) and act as important agents of change in business and management practice.

After making the case for integrating CSR in the curriculum, we analyze the main challenges and opportunities that are both facilitating and/or standing in the way of this mainstreaming. Various challenges have been discussed in the literature, and we consolidate and synthesize those more systematically, including the strong entrenchment of utilitarian perspectives and economic paradigms and the focus on hard skills, the potential shortages of qualified faculty in this domain, coupled with a host of practical implementation challenges (Gardiner and Lacy, 2005; Cowton and Cummins, 2003; Hawawini, 2005). On the other hand, critical success factors include the current global thrust towards accreditation, the commitment of faculty members, and a vision for responsibility at the level of the School (Gardiner and Lacy, 2005; Matten and Moon, 2004; Moratis *et al.*, 2006). We also flesh out how these drivers and constraints have played out in the context of one specific business school to bring the discussion closer to reality.

The chapter also focuses more specifically on the important role of commitment at the level of business school leadership and crystallizing a vision for responsibility in the context of management education for integrity. In this respect, we highlight the important role of the Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) in inspiring responsible management education for integrity. We argue that the PRME are not only guided by internationally accepted values and aspirations, but more importantly, that they can help institutionalize a process of continuous improvement and reinforce the mainstreaming of CSR in a systematic manner. Indeed, the PRME can serve as a framework for systemic change in the context of management education for integrity because of the required engagement model with these principles revolving around commitment, continuous improvement, a learning network and reporting on progress. The PRME thus constitute a good starting point for business schools to formalize their commitment to CSR and its mainstreaming.

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