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# We Are the Champions: Organizational Learning and Change for Responsible Management Education

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## Abstract

As the number of institutions adopting the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative grows, there is an overhanging risk that many of them will merely add "responsibility" as a topic to the existing curriculum. The authors contend that a serious reading of PRME should instead entail thinking in terms of a gradual transformation of management education. Such a serious reading poses a number of organizational learning (and unlearning) challenges. By relying on their own experiences at two PRME signatory business schools in France and Finland, they describe how faculty champions may face these challenges in implementing PRME, and specifically how they may overcome strategic, structural, and cultural barriers. The authors particularly emphasize political challenges at every level and the role of champions inducing reflexivity in overcoming some of the barriers. They argue that although faculty champions are not the most powerful actors within the business school, they are still well positioned to inspire and instill the needed transformation of management education. They conclude that faculty champions need to creatively "make do" within the constraints imposed by their organizational context.

## Keywords

UN Principles for Responsible Management Education, organizational learning, faculty champions, reflexivity

Over the past two decades corporate responsibility (CR) has emerged as the business response to the increasing expectations of society relating to sustainability. Although some companies have engaged in learning processes with their stakeholders to integrate new social and environmental issues in their strategy and activities (Berthoin Antal & Sobczak, 2004), many others limit themselves to CR-reporting practices and rhetoric (Burritt & Schaltegger, 2010; Kolk & Pinkse, 2009), which has been criticized by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and academics (e.g., Banerjee, 2007; Fougère & Solitander, 2009) who have exposed much of CR practice as merely an add-on to business as usual, leading to little or no transformation toward more sustainable business practice. The critique has been flanked by growing concern about and distrust toward organizational leaders' ability and willingness to act in a responsible manner (Khurana & Nohria, 2008). Implementing ambitious CR strategies and regaining lost societal legitimacy will necessitate that business leaders be increasingly proactive in creating sustainable visions for their organizations. For this change to happen, a strong emphasis on "responsible leadership" will be needed not only within organizations but in society as a whole. We argue that the role of business school education will be particularly central in favoring the development of responsible managers.

To mobilize business schools in this endeavor, the United Nations' Global Compact (UNGC) office launched the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). By signing these principles, business schools commit to integrating the idea of responsible management not only in their research, teaching, and relations with different stakeholders but also in their own organization. It is possible that for some business schools, implementing PRME will only entail adding "responsibility" to the existing curriculum and structures without engaging in deeper learning (Sterling, 2004) and the accompanying changes to pedagogy, policies, organizational structures, and ethos. Even if PRME in its current form allows for this minimal approach (Fernandes, 2010), we are skeptical about the

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potential of this approach to help redesign the role of management education in face of the current challenges and critiques.

Deeper organizational learning may not be a requirement of PRME, but we contend that if we are serious (as we are) about achieving the goals defined by PRME, there is a need to invite reflexive practice within business schools, critically examine existing assumptions and practice in management education through a “questioning attitude” (Marshall et al., 2010), and enable deeper change. A serious implementation of PRME will hence pose a number of organizational learning challenges even to the most active business schools in the field of CR. “Education for change” necessitates changes in terms of both learning through higher education and learning within higher education (Sterling, 2004, p. 49). Thus, the general question we address in this article is the following: If the PRME initiative is to be taken seriously as a project aimed at transforming management education, then what are the organizational learning challenges for business schools? More specifically, in line with insights from organizational learning literature (Berthoin Antal, Dierkes, & Hahner, 1997; Lawrence, Mauws, Dyck, & Kleysen, 2005), we examine the challenges faced by (faculty) champions in the process of implementing PRME.

Whereas much of the contribution to the debate on responsible management education has focused on the pedagogical dimension—that is, the content of the courses related to CR (e.g., Collins & Kearins, 2010; Kurland et al., 2010), their place in the curriculum (e.g., Christensen, Peirce, Hartman, Hoffman, & Carrier, 2007; Crane & Matten, 2004), and the teaching methods (e.g., Nicholson & DeMoss, 2009; Shrivastava, 2010)—this article highlights the importance of examining the integration of PRME both at the school level and in and through micro practices—in particular, teaching and learning practices. Our approach thus seeks to combine a focus on pedagogy with a more holistic view on how the integration of responsible management education can be organized, drawing in part on Rusinko’s (2010) articulation of the different options for integrating sustainability in management education.

We describe and compare the organizational learning processes we have experienced in two European business schools—Audencia Nantes School of Management in France (henceforth Audencia) and Hanken School of Economics in Finland (henceforth Hanken)—that were among the early signatories of PRME at its launch in 2008. As faculty members interested in these issues, we (NS, MF, and AS) championed the adoption of PRME and have been largely in charge of their implementation in our respective schools, at school, subject, and course levels. As the two schools have developed different forms of organizational learning and differ in how social and environmental issues are integrated in teaching, we have regularly exchanged experiences and have developed several common projects to benefit from interorganizational learning in implementing PRME. This article serves as a reflection on the challenges encountered during these different (interorganizational, intraorganizational, and pedagogical) learning processes, with a particular emphasis on our roles as champions (Berthoin Antal et al., 1997; Lawrence et al., 2005). It is meant to be useful to PRME-affiliated and non-PRME-affiliated schools by describing in some detail what a serious reading of PRME may look like; how strategic, structural, and cultural barriers to such a serious reading may be overcome; and how some of the inherent challenges may be coped with—in particular those related to the politics of organizational learning.

After this introduction, the article is structured as follows: In the first section, we review relevant organizational learning literature to analyze the changes needed to implement PRME in order to identify possible barriers to learning and the role of champions in overcoming these barriers. In the second section, we illustrate this theoretical framework with the experience we have acquired in implementing PRME in our two business schools. After briefly introducing the organizational contexts of the two business schools, we discuss the different barriers we have met when implementing PRME and the ways we have striven to overcome these barriers. We conclude the article with some implications for achieving the changes necessary for responsible management education.

## **Organizational Learning for Responsible Management Education**

If business schools are to take the challenge of PRME seriously, and the task is to “develop a new generation of business leaders capable of managing the complex challenges faced by business and society in the 21st century” and “[embedding] corporate responsibility and sustainability [ . . . ] in the

main-stream of business-related education” (unprme.org), it will not only be a matter of adding ethics or CR to the curriculum as subjects or simply reporting on “business education as usual” in a letter of support. Rather, it is our view that such adaptive change, although necessary, is not sufficient. The challenge is enabling change to a new state, that is, responsible management education. Such a transformation will require that those involved—teachers, researchers, students, and administrators—engage in a reflexive learning process that will at times question the adequacy of the educational institution itself (Sterling, 2004). This process is challenging because business schools are not generally characterized by reflexivity, the “ability to encounter the familiar as new (unfamiliar) [which helps] to reflect on one’s reflections” (Antonacopoulou, 2010, p. 7) but rather by the transmission of research findings and the development of instrumental skills that are aligned with the needs of business (Antonacopoulou, 2010; Sterling, 2004).

Rather than imposing a standard model of how business schools should integrate social and environmental issues in their teaching, PRME offers a (quite open) space for organizational learning, in a similar way as the UNGC does for companies (Kell, 2005; Ruggie, 2001). Participating schools are asked to report in a transparent manner their PRME-related activities, thus offering an opportunity for benchmarking among business schools. Yet PRME, open as it is, also opens up the opportunity for different interpretations that are not about transformative processes, as can be seen in a recent comment by the president of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB; Fernandes, 2010):

[Being a] PRME signatory [. . .] simply means that a school must send a letter to the UN Global Compact indicating its support of the principles and intention to follow them. If a school is making progress in just one of the six principles, it is still eligible to be a signatory. (p. 1)

This position assumes that at least some of the knowledge and practices of responsible management education are already in place in most business schools and that PRME requires only limited self-corrective learning by the participating institutions. In organizational learning literature (Argyris & Schön, 1978), such self-corrective learning is referred to as “single-loop learning,” which can be interpreted as a “change within changelessness” (Clark, as cited in Sterling, 2004, p. 55). In our view, such a defensive reading of PRME is likely to undermine its ability to develop responsible leaders and further question the legitimacy of management education (Khurana & Nohria, 2008).

We posit that if PRME supposes an ongoing learning process—since the social and environmental challenges as well as stakeholders’ expectations change over time (Berthoin Antal & Sobczak, 2004)—then the response from business schools should not simply be about keeping the system stable, that is, single-loop learning but also about transforming into a new state in relation to the changing societal context and expectations (Sterling, 2004). This kind of change requires deeper, “double-loop” learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978), which entails a questioning of fundamental assumptions through reflexivity (Antonacopoulou, 2010; Sterling, 2004)—including questioning of the organization’s underlying norms or values (Argyris & Schön, 1978)— and the unlearning of current practices (Antonacopoulou, 2010; Dehler, 2009), both of which pose great challenges for business schools.

As Sterling (2004, p. 49) notes, one of the main challenges of integrating CR in institutions of higher education is that they are designed for the provision of information and ideas in relation to “education for change” (learning through higher education) rather than for a change in education (learning within higher education). Business schools are not primarily reflexive organizations, which poses a profound challenge for organizational learning. The need for more reflexivity in business school education has been underlined by many scholars with an interest in critical management education (e.g., Cunliffe, 2004; Gutiérrez, 2002). As Antonacopoulou (2010) puts it, although reflection provides a necessary foundation for initiating change by exposing underlying tensions, it can only lead to change if it is supplemented with reflexivity, the “ability to encounter the familiar as new (unfamiliar) [which helps] to reflect on one’s reflections” (p. 7). Reflection involves giving order to situations, whereas reflexivity entails unsettling conventional practice and the ability to be critical of our own intellectual assumptions (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004; Gray, 2007). But which are the practices that need to be unsettled in the context of implementing PRME?

Practices that act as barriers to organizational learning may be linked to the external context. This situation is particularly true in the field of CR since the need for organizational integration of these values is still questioned and contrasts with the focus on the short term as well as on financial performance indicators (Porter & Kramer, 2006). However, research (Argyris, 1990, Cohen & Levinthal, 1990) has shown that many key barriers are internal to the organization and may be linked to the organization's strategy, structure, or culture.

*Strategic barriers* include the lack of strategic interest in learning (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990) or the tendency to overlook the larger picture (Levinthal & March, 1993). Business schools are increasingly tied to short-term goals, notably in relation to the pressure of business school rankings in the competition for students and partner companies (Gioia & Corley, 2002; Harvey, 2008). This pressure may lead the business schools' management to focus on criteria used in the rankings rather than to develop their own independent long-term strategy. This behavior can be reinforced by a difficult financial context, in which public authorities reduce their contribution to academic institutions. In this situation, the need to integrate the social and environmental issues into teaching may not always be recognized as a strategic priority. The schools that have signed PRME have seemingly overcome some strategic barriers by garnering the support of the schools' highest leadership; but on the other hand, just signing PRME signals little in terms of action, deeper learning, or reflexivity—the large number of signatory schools (30% at the time of writing) that have not submitted their required sharing information of progress reports (SIPs) might be an indication of lack of action and transformation.

*Structural barriers* are typically linked to impermeable boundaries between different parts of the organization or between the organization and external stakeholders (Garvin, 1993). These barriers are challenging in the context of CR, since questions about business and its relation to ethics, nature, and society are inherently cross-disciplinary. In theory, this emphasis on cross-disciplinarity opens up for great opportunities, innovative approaches, and outcomes, in both research and teaching (Sims & Brinkmann, 2003). But in practice, successful cross-disciplinary approaches even within the same institution are harder to come by as the different departments often compete for the same resources, are weary of concepts “not invented here,” and/or feel that they do not possess the resources to coordinate activities that span organizational boundaries.

This reluctance leads us to *cultural barriers*, which are often related to defensive routines denying the existence of a problem (Argyris, 1990; Wooten, Perry, & Hayes, 2004): This situation is where the lack of reflexivity is most problematic. Examples of cultural barriers include the rejection of CR in the curriculum based on the view that it is about values (with the belief that values are formed prior to higher education and/or that values are not/should not be taught at business schools) and/or the idea that CR is irrelevant (McKenzie & Polat, 2007).

### *The Champions*

Previous research on organizational learning has underlined the importance of different actors in overcoming and navigating past barriers of organizational learning (Schilling & Kluge, 2009). It has particularly emphasized the role of “sponsors” at the top level of the organization who should highlight the need and the strategic interest for learning (Berthoin Antal et al., 1997). PRME recognizes the role of sponsors by requiring the signature of the business school's dean in support of the principles. Research has, however, also shown that organizational learning supposes the active involvement of champions at lower levels to overcome the barriers to organizational learning (Berthoin Antal et al., 1997). Although recognizing that each champion might possess different skills and resources (Lawrence et al., 2005, p. 189), we here define (drawing on Antonacopoulou & Chiva, 2007) 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. The role of the champion in this context is to effectively try to foster organizational learning, acting with a mind-set of critical reflexivity while doing so. Following Cunliffe (2009, p. 93), we see it as central that champions are faculty members who dare to enact their own criticality, as we cannot expect the future managers we educate to be reflexive of the very system they (and we) are part of if they are being challenged to do so by the “comfortable” and unreflexive academic. The emphasis on reflexivity also highlights the important relationship between organizational learning and individual learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978), where the champion is engaged not only in teaching but equally in learning.

As members of the faculty in our two business schools, we have striven to act as such champions, actively promoting the adoption of PRME and then being empowered to implement PRME not only through courses we teach but also with possibilities to create new structures. Our involvement in preparing the schools' SIPs, as well as the opportunity to compare the approaches of our two schools, has also opened up some avenues for reflexivity. In this process we have encountered a number of challenges that relate to the discussion of how champions have to rely on different skills to cope with "the politics of organizational learning" (Lawrence et al., 2005, p. 189). Such coping entails taking into account "inequalities of power and control, the diversity of perspectives and motives underlying learning, and the tensions between individual and organizational priorities in learning" (Antonacopoulou, 2006, p. 467). However, it should be noted that the politics of organizational learning is not a "dysfunctional aspect that needs to be remedied" (Lawrence et al., 2005, p.188) but, rather, often an intrinsic part of the learning process that needs to be understood by PRME champions in their multiple roles as administrators, researchers, and teachers. Also, any action taken by the champions will in itself be part of the politics of organizational learning. For deeper learning to occur, schools need active champions "who are willing to engage in political behavior that pushes ideas forward and ensures their interpretation, integration, and institutionalization" (Lawrence et al., 2005, p. 190).

### *Coping With the Politics of Organizational Learning*

First, to gain acceptance for the changes brought about by PRME, champions need to "engage in the influence tactics necessary to gain [their] acceptance by others," which means that they need to be able to "access informal networks, frame the idea in a compelling manner, and manage the ambiguity of the process" (Lawrence et al., 2005, p. 189). PRME itself provides such a platform for legitimization, as does the rising interest of accreditation organizations such as the AACSB and the European Foundation for Management Development in integrating CR in the curriculum. Framing PRME within the context of accreditation can thus be used as a tool to address strategic barriers. The champions can also use the networking opportunities provided by PRME and accreditation organizations to gain knowledge about what kind of influence tactics are being applied at other schools.

Second, to make a difference at the school level, champions should ideally have "the authority to ensure that collective action is enforced and [. . .] a direct link to the organization's dominant coalition" (Lawrence et al., 2005, p. 189). It does not necessarily mean that champions are located at the top of the school's hierarchy but that they at least have good opportunities to communicate directly with people involved in strategic decision making.

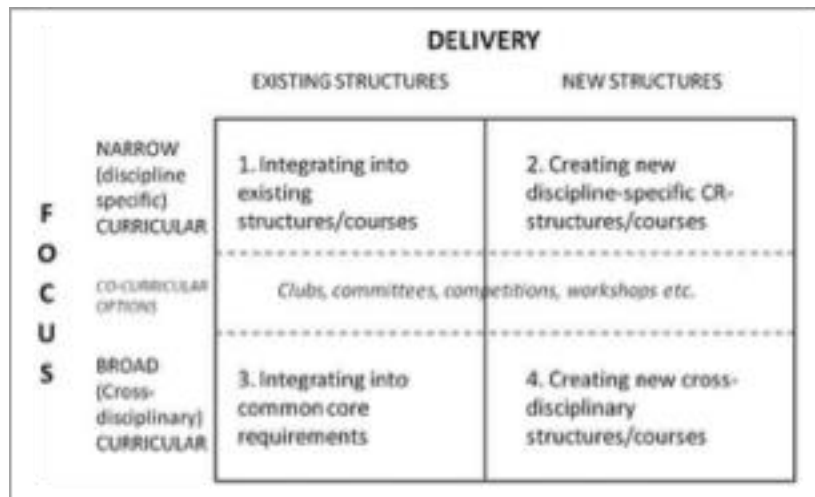
Third, the pan-organizational institutionalization of the changes may require the champions to be members of the dominant coalition (Lawrence et al., 2005). For champions such as us, who are not quite influential enough to directly impose new systems, it typically means that we have to act within certain constraints and need to "make do" with the limited possibilities we have while trying to convince the dominant coalition that some pan-organizational change is needed. Of these make-do tools, the role of teaching and access to formal/informal networks of cooperation are especially central, as will be discussed later. However, to convince the dominant coalition, champions need to be not only motivated by the challenge of implementing a serious reading of PRME but also willing to engage in political behavior in order to ensure its successful institutionalization.

### *Tools for Overcoming the Three Types of Barriers*

Increasing the level of reflexivity is central in the process of overcoming barriers of organizational learning (Antonacopoulou, 2010; Gray, 2007). Reflexivity involves examination of "normalized" educational strategies, programs, and organizational practices (Cunliffe, 2009) to understand how and why these might affect or hinder organizational learning. Thus, we discuss some of the practices and tools that champions could use in their attempts to be reflexive and thereby contribute to the establishment of a new state that could be referred to as responsible management education.

Our own involvement on both macro and micro levels allows us to reflect on our implementation of PRME in our respective schools. Although we were not aware of Rusinko's (2010) matrix of four

options (see Figure 1) when implementing the principles, we find the matrix particularly useful in describing our roles as champions, the organizational learning challenges we have faced particularly in terms of strategic and structural barriers, and the different measures we have taken at the more macro level (in terms of using existing structures vs. creating new structures, and keeping narrow, discipline-specific focus vs. opting for a broader, cross-disciplinary approach) in our schools.



**Figure 1.** Options for integrating corporate responsibility in management education  
Source: Adapted from Rusinko (2010).

The two axes in Figure 1 can be seen as a combination of strategic and structural dilemmas we have faced when implementing PRME; but the different options are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and we will show that our implementation has involved a blend of the different options. Although Rusinko (2010) suggests that it makes sense for faculty champions to start in Quadrant 1, she also points out that they “can work with other faculty members in their disciplines to facilitate wider dissemination of sustainability across the curriculum” (p. 517). We would go further and claim that it makes sense to empower these champions and let them come up with creative propositions and solutions for how to implement the principles. In our respective experiences, we believe that it is this empowerment of the champions that has made some real change possible, as we will discuss later.

## Illustrating Organizational Learning for PRME Within Two Schools

To illustrate the theoretical analysis of organizational learning processes in implementing PRME and the different barriers, this section focuses on our experiences in two different business schools in Europe (Audencia in France and Hanken in Finland).

In identifying the different barriers and means for champions to deal with them, we rely mainly on our own experiences but also draw inspiration from interview accounts from both our students and ourselves. At Audencia, AS collected reflections from all the students of the school’s CR track on the pedagogical and content differences between courses related to CR and other courses. In addition, AS conducted eight individual interviews with some of these students to reflect on and complement the written statements. At Hanken, NS, MF, and HH carried out interviews about the learning experiences of students within the school’s cross-disciplinary “Corporate Responsibility Study Module” (CR module) with 11 students in three focus group interviews. HH also interviewed heads or representatives of each department at Hanken to get an overview of the integration of CR topics in the different subjects. Finally, HH also interviewed NS, MF, and AS asking them to reflect on (and question) their pedagogical approaches in their respective courses.

As described in the previous section, organizational learning depends to a large extent on the organizational context, which also lays the foundation in terms of the role of the champions, and the

resources at their disposal. Thus, we first set the frame in which the learning processes took place, by briefly describing the two schools' governance systems and the actors involved in the implementation of PRME.

### *PRME in the Organizational Context of the Two Business Schools*

Audencia is one of the top business schools in France. Independent from university, it is governed by a board composed of representatives from the local chamber of commerce and from the local government. The board appoints the dean, who acts as a director general and appoints in a unilateral way all the other members of the school's management, including the program directors, the dean for academic affairs, and the heads of the different disciplines. The dean also has the final decision on the recruitment of new faculty members who have employment contracts similar to white-collar employees in companies, which differs from professors in French universities who are civil servants. Over the past 6 years, Audencia has actively developed the integration of social and environmental issues in research and teaching. In 2004, Audencia was the first academic institution in France to sign the UNGC, and its dean has been involved in the task force that has drafted PRME—before being among the first to sign them.

Hanken is one of the leading business schools in Finland. Until 2010 it was a state institution, and all its employees were civil servants. As a result of the national university reform of 2010, it is now a corporation under public law (public university). Although the importance of private donations has increased through this reform, the majority of the core funding still comes from the State. Unlike Audencia (in France the business school system has always been clearly separated from the university system), Hanken provides the same degrees as universities (both master's and doctoral level) and can be considered to be a faculty of economics and business administration. Hanken is governed by a board led by an external chair and with members representing employee groups, students, and external stakeholders; the board is elected by a council representing employees and students. The board appoints a rector (similar to dean) to lead the day-to-day operations. Hanken was among the first schools to sign PRME.

To provide some more context, in Figure 2 we use Rusinko's (2010) matrix to summarize how PRME has been implemented in both schools.

		DELIVERY	
		EXISTING STRUCTURES	NEW STRUCTURES
F O C U S	NARROW (discipline specific) CURRICULAR	A: Integration into existing courses (e.g. HRM, Procurement) B: Integration into existing courses (e.g. IB, HRM, Branding)	A: New courses (e.g. Stakeholder Management; Business Ethics) B: New courses (e.g. Business, Government and Society; Green SCM; CSR; from principles to practice)
	CO-CURRICULAR OPTIONS	A: Students' clubs organizing a CR film festival and an ethical fashion show; Organization of seminars and conferences B: Green Office process; Open events (workshops, discussions, film screenings, etc.); Local NetImpact chapter; CR/Ethics as a Theme of annual school events	
	BROAD (Cross- disciplinary) CURRICULAR	A: Mandatory introduction to CR in all programmes B: Integration as compulsory topic in MBA and master's; Perspective made central in two introductory courses (for all bachelor's students)	A: Institute for Global Responsibility; GR track B: CR module; Cross-disciplinary research group organizing seminars and conferences

**Figure 2.** Audencia's (A) and Hanken's (B) organizational integration of Principles for Responsible Management Education  
Source: Adapted from Rusinko (2010).

To coordinate its PRME-related activities, Audencia has created an Institute for Global Responsibility. Directed by a member of the faculty (AS) and including 12 professors, the Institute cooperates with the different actors in the school. The first important step in the integration of CR issues in the curriculum occurred in 2004, when AS suggested the creation of the CR Track in the school's Master's in Management program, consisting of courses on CR and a team project conducted in partnership with



local companies. Since 2006, CR as a topic has been directly integrated in all new specialized master's programs launched at the school. The development of new programs was used as an opportunity to experiment with new teaching contents and methods without having to change existing structures. Only after the first positive results of the CR track and the CR courses in some new programs did Audencia start the more difficult task of changing the existing programs by introducing relevant CR contents. Today, all existing programs within the school include a mandatory course on CR.

Unlike Audencia, Hanken has no independent unit dealing with responsibility issues. Instead, a budget has been allocated to PRME implementation as a project within the school managed by NS. The course structure, however, has been affected: A cross-disciplinary, elective study module in CR has been developed under the supervision of NS and MF. The module combines perspectives on CR from five different subjects with a minimum of four courses and is registered as a minor subject for the bachelor's and master's degree. When the module was first put together in 2008 it assembled existing courses that focused on CR issues as a central topic, but the previous year has seen addition of new courses that have been partially developed with the module in mind. Compared with Audencia, the development of the module at Hanken has clearly been more organic and less strategically steered. For instance, it has not been imposed that the subjects offer a course that fits the scope of the module; rather, it has been a voluntary matter from faculty champions from different disciplines. Thus, even if the module is a new structure, its assembled content is more reliant on existing resources and structures—although this setup has been evolving with the addition of new courses to the module. On the bachelor's level, CR as a topic has been heavily integrated into two existing courses mandatory for all students, which is an explicit development after signing PRME.

### *Overcoming Strategic Barriers in Implementing PRME*

The signature of PRME by the deans of our schools has contributed to highlight the strategic importance to strengthen the integration of CR in all activities. In Audencia, this strategic importance has been reinforced by the dean's involvement in the task force that drafted PRME. However, to conduct the necessary changes throughout the business schools and to develop reflexivity, the strategic importance ideally has to be recognized not only at the dean's level but in all parts of the organizations, in particular among the program directors and/or the heads of the different academic disciplines. For the latter, the integration of PRME in their activities may not always be a strategic priority. This situation is illustrative of the politics of organizational learning within the context of PRME, and our (political) role as champions is to contribute to raising the awareness about the strategic importance of implementing PRME throughout the school. To achieve this political aim, two kinds of actions may be undertaken. First, champions may convince the dean that he or she has to actively support the implementation of PRME by reminding the business schools stakeholders, and in particular the program directors and heads of disciplines or research centers, of its strategic importance. Second, champions may work directly with the latter to help them discover the strategic interest of integrating CR in order to adapt to the expectations of society and stakeholders.

At Audencia, both kinds of actions have been used. The champion (AS) has constantly cooperated with the dean in highlighting the strategic importance of PRME to the external stakeholders. The dean has signed the preface of the schools' annuals SIPs and introduced all major events in the school linked to CR. The dean even acted as moderator of the school's first PRME day in 2010, interviewing representatives of companies, NGOs, faculty, and the PRME office. The dean's personal involvement obviously had an impact on the recognition of the strategic importance of PRME among the internal stakeholders, in particular the program directors and heads of disciplines or research centers. Nevertheless, the champion also developed a more direct approach to influence the politics of organizational learning with these internal stakeholders. He has, for example, cooperated closely with the school's MBA director in integrating CR in all courses taught in this program to differentiate it from other competitors in France. More specifically, he has underlined the opportunity for the school's MBA program to be ranked in the Aspen Institute's Beyond Grey Pinstripes Ranking that evaluates MBA programs according to the integration of CR issues. As a result, the school's MBA program has been one of the only three French MBAs included in the top 100 of this ranking (in more general rankings Audencia is usually Number 6; CR thus becomes a source of higher status for the school, which contributes to strategic commitment to CR).

In a similar way, the champion has worked with different heads of discipline and research centers to develop closer partnerships with companies by integrating CR in research projects or pedagogy. For example, he worked with the head of a research centre in marketing to enlarge the existing partnership with a supermarket chain by developing research on the expectations of consumers in the field of CR. The success of these cooperations was largely based on the lack of hierarchical power of the champion, who, rather than imposing the integration of CR, convinced his colleagues of the strategic value this choice would have for the activities they were managing. Whereas the sponsors may use their power to impose the school's general commitment to PRME, the champions may rely more on pedagogical tools to provide them political leverage, trying to nudge different actors into discovering their own interests in implementing PRME in their own activities or even to go further in order to differentiate their activities from other parts of the school.

At Hanken, the successive deans have also written the preface to the SIPs, showing their continued commitment to PRME. Overall, however, the level of strategic priority that has been given to CR issues has been comparatively lower than at Audencia. This difference has to do with Hanken's governance system and its more "bottom-up" decision-making culture, which both empowers champions (initiatives are welcome) and constrains the strategic implications of their actions (an implementation in every discipline cannot be imposed or even strongly supported from the top). Interestingly, PRME itself has been used by the champions as a political lever to overcome these strategic barriers, in two main ways.

First, SIPs have been used to raise awareness on CR issues, not only because they have given opportunities to the deans to reflect on these issues when writing the prefaces but also because the reports have been occasions for efforts of both internal and external communication. The design and contents of Hanken's reports have received positive feedback from other schools involved in PRME, which has been noted by the deans and has contributed to raising PRME on their strategic agenda. Second, the possible relation between PRME and further accreditation of the school has been used as a lever. Initially, PRME was marketed by NS and MF to the leadership of the school with the anticipation that CR in the curriculum will become a more explicit issue in accreditation processes in the future. In this case, the influence tactics used did not need to be very strong as the dean had picked up similar signals through formal and informal international networks and was thus very keen on the idea.

Hanken is now in an AACSB accreditation process, and as a consequence the leadership has allocated more explicit strategic importance to how CR and ethical issues are integrated in the curriculum. NS and MF have thus been invited to give their input on these strategic issues. In addition, the cooperation between Audencia and Hanken has been highly valuable here since AS and MF have held a session on the implementation of (and cooperation on) PRME at the AACSB conference in Paris during Fall 2010; this cooperation has helped put both schools more strongly on the map as role models in terms of PRME implementation, which in turn has helped raise awareness of the strategic nature of PRME internally.

### *Overcoming Structural Barriers in Implementing PRME*

Implementing PRME throughout the business school presupposes that several structural barriers be overcome. Overcoming structural barriers is particularly the case when it comes to integrating CR in the different disciplines. A serious integration of social and environmental issues in all existing disciplines and programs indeed requires complex organizational learning processes, including in particular unlearning (Sterling, 2004). Even in case of a clear decision from the dean in this direction (as has been the case at Audencia), which helps overcome the strategic barriers, the champion will have to actively convince the different heads of department and/or program directors to change the curriculum. This change can be difficult since the new contents will have to replace some existing contents, as it is not desirable to just add more hours. For example, at Hanken, faculty of some subjects have expressed unwillingness to participate with courses in the CR module in fear that it would increase the class size and thus make classes too large to handle with current resources. Furthermore, there has to be some control to ensure that faculty effectively deals with the integration of new content. In any business school, such a process would meet strong structural and cultural barriers since most faculty members are keen on their academic freedom to decide on the relevant knowledge to transmit to students. Again, this situation is illustrative of the kind of politics of learning

that will almost always be present in institutions of higher education but that have to be addressed when attempting to induce change.

The experience at both Audencia and Hanken is that a cross-disciplinary approach can be established by relying more on faculty members in different disciplines rather than only on top-down decisions from program directors and/or heads of departments. As champions, we have dealt with the issue by using our informal networks across different disciplines and tried to convince other potential champions to integrate PRME in their own teaching or even to create new courses more in line with the principles. At Audencia, the experience of some programs has shown that the support from the program director alone is not enough. In the past, despite the director's official support to integrating PRME throughout all courses, students reported that not all professors were actually referring to these issues and that sometimes they were unable to reply to students' questions relating to CR. The program director and AS thus decided to invite the whole group of faculty involved in the program to discuss how to integrate CR and to provide them support in identifying relevant case studies or faculty members in their disciplines who might help them relate to this field or replace them for parts of the teaching.

At Hanken, the implementation of PRME and the CR module has been "two-headed" (by NS and MF), that is, from two different departments, which has helped both students and staff understand that CR is cross-disciplinary. However, one problem has been that the resource allocation system of the school leads to incentives for departments to compete for recognition. These political tensions caused by internal competition between units are particularly (and probably increasingly) common in business schools. At Hanken, such tension has posed a number of challenges as well-intentioned senior faculty members from the two departments have discussed PRME with other top decision makers at the school by putting more emphasis on the individual merits of NS and MF rather than on the value of our cooperative work. This situation has made it obvious that it is critical to show how the value-creating "capital" in PRME implementation has been the cooperation made possible by informal networks and social capital rather than financial resources devoted to PRME implementation. NS and MF have struggled with these individualizing dynamics several times. We are still, at times, faced with such tensions, and we strive to remind decision makers that when it comes to PRME, cooperation is the name of the game.

Another key structural barrier that we have identified at Hanken is the "not invented here" syndrome: When faculty decision makers do not want to take on CR in their department because they believe it does not relate to central discussions within their field. An interesting way in which such politics of learning has been addressed is through the use of student feedback. For example, a marketing student taking courses in the CR module pointed out in a focus group interview that there are many ethical questions you could discuss in marketing and we're not doing that, touching upon that at all in our courses . . . [But now] I've noticed in my courses, that the students have started to take these things into consideration, like environmental issues and started opening discussions about them in class.

Thus, teaching in itself can lead to spreading the demand for more CR-related course content in other disciplines, which helps overcome both structural and cultural barriers. Also, as was the case with strategic barriers, PRME itself provides a tool that might be used to address structural barriers. At Hanken, as we have collected data for the SIPs we have noted the organizational politics at play when department heads all want to show something tangible for their subjects as they are aware that other subjects will showcase publications, courses, or other CR-related activities. As the activities that are reported on by each subject (or by other schools) increase, so does the pressure to keep up or at least not to be left behind completely. The SIPs can thus also be a tool for reflexivity through which department heads are "forced" to reflect on the subject's relation to CR and responsible management education. The champion can leverage this process by being active in the collection of data for the SIPs, for example, by asking program leaders and heads of departments questions related to the integration of PRME with the intent of making them encounter the familiar subject as new and by actively raising awareness internally about the SIP reports on its publication.

### *Overcoming Cultural Barriers in Implementing PRME*

The process of implementing PRME and integrating CR in teaching will also most likely meet cultural barriers and reveal politics of organizational learning in the form of a resistance to change, in particular when the aim is to promote critical thinking and reflexivity among both faculty members and students as well as to help students develop the necessary skills to take concrete actions once they have become managers. To promote critical thinking and reflexivity, champions may explicitly invite the students to question the values that are being conveyed within different courses.

At both schools there are many PRME-related processes that are used as occasions for enhancing reflexivity, and thus they bring about cultural change. We wish to reflect here on two main processes that are common for both schools. First, the very planning impetus that PRME gives rise to—setting in motion different processes—leads to more reflexivity and cultural change. Recently, a partnership between Audencia and the World Wide Fund for Nature has led to regular interactions between faculty members and the representatives of the NGO. To disseminate reflexivity among students and employees, Audencia finally decided to organize each month a CR workshop where an expert or an activist in the field of CR presents his own experience and discusses with the school's internal stakeholders the ways such practice may inspire them to change their own behavior inside the school.

An example from Hanken that illustrates the planning impetus very well is the World Wide Fund Green Office process that was launched as a result of thinking about what could be promised in terms of organizational practices and internal operations of the school (the “addendum principle” of PRME) on Hanken's first SIP. The way Green Office is meant to function is precisely as a device for reflecting on how everyday actions have an environmental impact, and it has turned out to be a good way to enhance cultural change not only in everyday practices but also in awareness and willingness to reflect on what more responsible individual action entails.

Second, and perhaps most important, the implementation of PRME has contributed to enhance student and faculty reflexivity on management education and business practice at both schools (which may lead to enhanced faculty reflexivity through student feedback, as seen relating to structural barriers with the example of marketing), though in slightly different ways. There is a difference between Audencia and Hanken in the extent to which the pedagogical approaches favor a neutral stance or a steering of values. Audencia has clearly decided to affirm CR as its core value, which has also been integrated in the school's mission. Audencia does not aim at imposing these values, but the school wants to convince students to adopt them by emphasizing the added value for themselves as persons and for the companies they will work for. At Audencia, AS has developed a CR track for students who want to develop their skills in this field beyond the mandatory courses for all students. Within this track, students have the opportunity to discuss issues with representatives from different stakeholder groups, including those with a critical view on business. Encouraging such discussions may favor reflexivity and start changing the organizational culture at the margin. AS has also created a blog and uses social networks to enable the students to reflect on different CR initiatives. The students of the CR track also have to do an internship in the field and to develop a concrete CR project in the local community. Here, AS acts as a tutor for the students and mobilizes his personal network as well as the ones of the different actors within the school to open new opportunities for the students.

At Hanken, it has been an explicit pedagogical approach of NS and MF to include exercises where students are challenged to see “the familiar as new,” that is, engage in reflexivity. In these types of assignments, students are asked, for example, to reflect on the values taught within their own majors. As is apparent in the example of students calling for a problematization of marketing, such student reflexivity may in turn lead to more faculty reflexivity: According to marketing faculty, the recent increased support for the integration of CR into the marketing curriculum has been directly related to student demand in this direction. However, several of the students interviewed at Hanken also pointed out that it should not be the role of business school educators to steer values—an understanding that is strengthened by Finnish academic culture that emphasizes “academic neutrality”—and that it might already be “too late” to affect the values of the students. The interviewees also, at times paradoxically, concluded that taking the CR module courses has affected their values and way of thinking:

[When] I started at Hanken with finance as a major it was quite the contrary [to the CR courses] there [was] a view from only inside the company and it was almost as if the company itself is the centre of the world somehow. [The mentality was] to develop and grow and internationalize and you don't really

think about different aspects—only that. And then you had marketing courses where you have the individual and the focus is how to sell and why to buy but you're not questioning the whole background or the effects of it—so yes, my vision has changed a lot since I started.

This view highlights well one of the most difficult cultural barriers at business schools: the naturalized understanding that values are not taught at business schools, only facts. We are critical of this view and see it as a lack of reflexivity among educators as problematic for implementing PRME.

## Conclusion

This article has explored the challenges and dynamics of organizational learning in the context of a serious reading and implementation of PRME in business schools, with a focus on two early signatories from France and Finland. In both schools, a process of gradual change has taken place, leading to increasing importance of responsible management education at strategic, structural, and cultural levels. This process of transformation is still ongoing as we are still in the early days of PRME, but it makes sense to briefly discuss the latest developments and where both schools now stand. At Audencia, the hard work of AS and his colleagues in the field of “global responsibility” has led to an exceptional strategic recognition of these issues. In a process of redefining the strategic priorities of the school, in 2011 all faculty members engaged in a reflection process of what the core subjects within the school are and should be, and the result was that the key distinguishing feature of the school's identity should be global responsibility. As a result, AS has now been appointed director of research, which shows how strategically important global responsibility is now considered at Audencia. At Hanken, responsibility issues have not reached such strategic significance, as a bottom-up culture makes the process more organic. But the international, cross-disciplinary academic conference organized at Hanken by the local champions in April 2011 (in cooperation with Audencia and another PRME signatory school, Instituto Superior de Administração e Economia/ Fundação Getúlio Vargas in Curitiba, Brazil) has led to enhanced responsibility awareness across subjects within the school, as conveners from four different subjects (management and organization, marketing, supply chain management and corporate geography, and politics and business) were involved, and streams related to finance and law were convened by faculty members from partner schools. Thus, recognition of the importance of social responsibility matters is also very much on the rise at Hanken, and there is optimism about more integration across all subjects in the future.

In our experiences as champions seeking to inspire a gradual transformation of management education at our respective schools, we have found that organizational learning barriers related to strategic, structural, and cultural issues pose significant challenges to the deeper learning necessary to enable such a transformation. Table 1 summarizes the central common challenges we have found at the two schools, the steps we as champions have taken to address them, and the general recommendations that we would derive for other faculty champions.

One important lesson that we believe can be learnt from our analysis of how these barriers have manifested themselves and how they have been addressed at two PRME signatory schools in Finland and France is that PRME, loose as it is, requires local translations, a creative way to develop local solutions, and strategies for coping with the inevitable politics of organizational learning—for instance, by using PRME itself as political leverage for strategic, structural, and cultural change. In the current, increasingly globalized environment in which business schools evolve, under pressure from different accreditation organizations and global governance initiatives such as PRME, it is important to bear in mind that full standardization is not desirable: An adaptation to the local organizational context and the most salient social and environmental challenges is more important than a systematic ticking of standardized—and sometimes meaningless—boxes (Berthoin Antal, Oppen, & Sobczak, 2009). However, we still believe that our experience can lead to some general guidelines to other PRME signatories: By highlighting the importance of the local organizational context, we have focused on the central role of PRME champions (Lawrence et al., 2005) in (a) coping and engaging in the politics of organizational learning and (b) identifying, navigating past, and eventually removing the barriers of organizational learning by using an arsenal of make-do resources, such as informal networks, inter- and intraorganizational/disciplinary collaboration, and pedagogy in teaching.

**Table 1.** Summary of Central Barriers to Organizational Learning at the Two Schools and Possible Recommendations

	Challenges	Champions Actions at the Two Schools	Recommendations for Champions
Strategic barriers	Questioning the strategic importance of CR in the curriculum	Using AACSB accreditation and Beyond Grey Pinstripes ranking as strategic lever	Making the link explicit between accreditations and CR in the curriculum  "Lighting the path" for others to discover their own interest in implementing PRME
Structural barriers	Balance between stand-alone courses and integration into all disciplines  "Not invented here" syndrome among faculty of certain subjects	Approaching CR as a strictly cross-disciplinary subject  Using informal networks to help colleagues identify relevant CR approaches	Building on existing resources to create new structures  Encouraging students to raise CR issues within courses/disciplines that lack such understanding  Active data collection for the SIPs, including interviews of faculty
Cultural barriers	Business schools not primarily reflexive organizations— difficulty of seeing the familiar as new for leadership, faculty, and students alike	Designing exercises where students critically reflect on the values that are being taught at business schools  Using the PRME as a tool to question existing conventions in teaching and administration	Increased problematization in teaching about the image of business school teaching as "value free"  Approaching PRME implementation through a serious reading of PRME and using it as a tool for seeing the familiar as new

Note: CR = corporate responsibility; AACSB = Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business; PRME = Principles for Responsible Management Education; SIP = sharing information of progress.

We have demonstrated that to address strategic barriers, it is critical to understand and recognize the role of intraschool politics. Although we have provided some examples in terms of how we have raised awareness about the strategic importance of implementing PRME, we recognize that at the strategic level, the inequalities of power and control may vary greatly depending on how much influence the champion holds at the school. Thus, our main general suggestion to other champions is that they need to be willing to engage in political behavior as the means to overcome strategic barriers and attempt to influence the school's strategic priorities when possible.

In relation to structural barriers, we would emphasize the use of SIPs both as a tool for reflexivity—through which department heads are made to reflect on their discipline's relation to responsible management education—and as a political lever that raises the importance of PRME-related activities, especially as it showcases the activities not only of particular schools but also of particular departments/subjects.

When it comes to cultural barriers, the great challenge for PRME champions is in terms of how to foster reflexivity, entailing the unsettling of conventional practice and the ability to be critical of our own intellectual assumptions (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004). Reflexivity particularly entails pedagogies that make it possible for students (and teachers) to see "the familiar as new," especially in terms of exposing the values conveyed within business subjects under the guise of academic neutrality. When

students are encouraged to be reflexive, their feedback in other disciplines may also lead to a gradual change in the approach to education in those disciplines. In an effort to inspire and provide some tangible guidance to future (and present) PRME champions, we have also presented Rusinko's (2010) matrix as a potential reflective tool that can contribute to the learning and (un)learning of champions.

Our analysis has also identified some issues for PRME in itself. For us as champions, the importance of informal cooperative networks between champions, both within one school and between schools, is perhaps the most central means for identifying, addressing, and overcoming all three barriers and coping with the inevitable political challenges. Thus, we urge PRME as an institution to increasingly offer platforms of organizational learning exchange not only for deans and high-level administrators but also for faculty champions, who may more easily engage in critical reflexivity, including at times the questioning of the organization's underlying norms or values (Argyris & Schön, 1978). If the goal of PRME is responsible management education, its implementation should not be about creating spaces only for comfort and complacency but also for the discomfort of reflexivity and, ultimately, change. Finally, we want to highlight the double-edged sword that PRME provides to champions, as both our experiences show. When CR in the curriculum becomes a more strategic and valued commodity (as is the aim of PRME) and when more resources are allocated to it, it can lead to heightened political tensions between actors competing for the same resources—and heightened competition. For champions, whose main capital is collaboration and partnership, the growing importance of CR in the curriculum might ironically prove an additional strategic, structural, and cultural barrier.

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